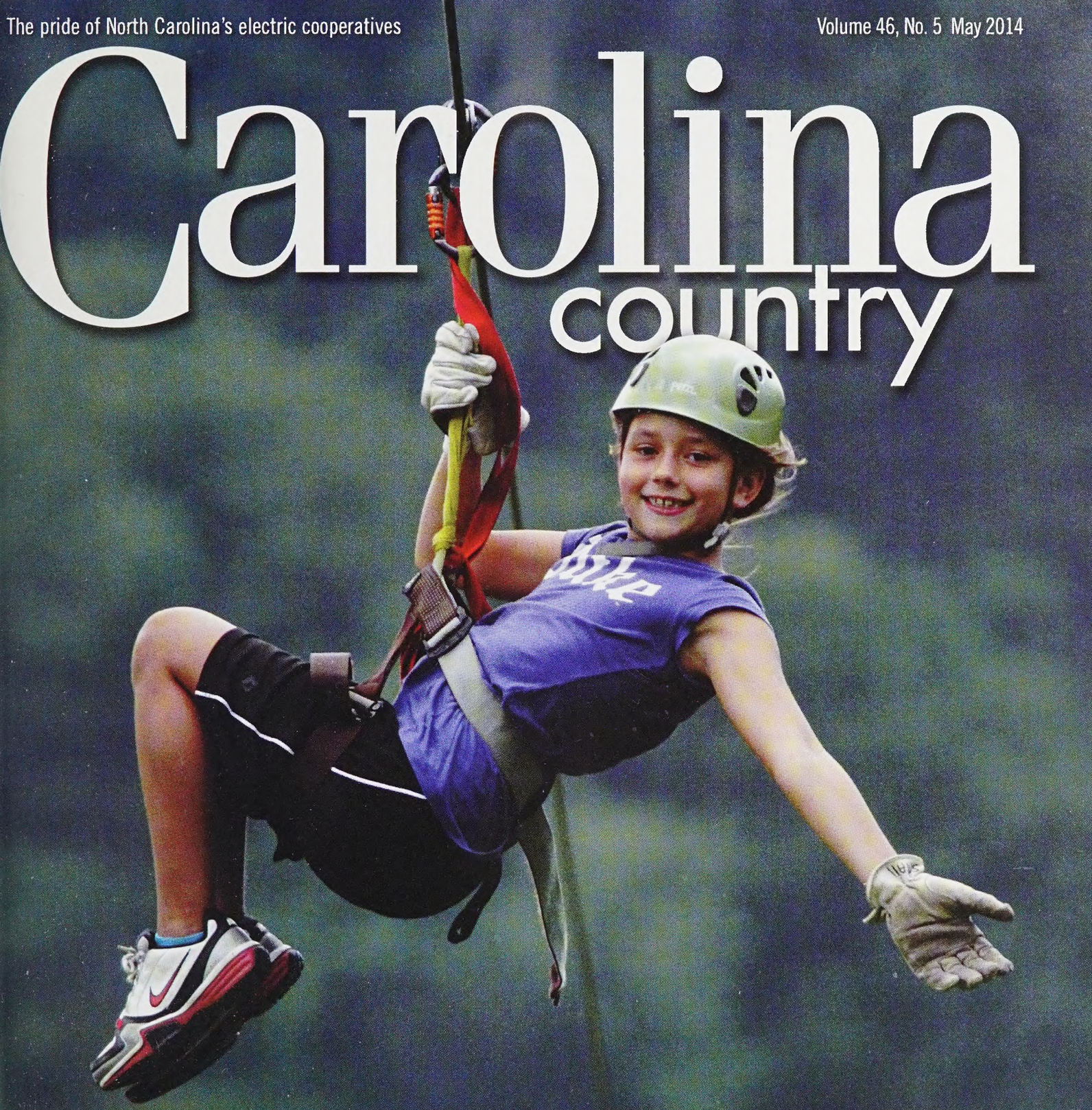
The pride of North Carolina's electric cooperatives

Volume 46, No. 5 May 2014

Carolina country



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INSIDE:

High Country adventures
Power for zettabytes
Cooperative Extension at 100

Piedmont EMC recognizes May as Electrical Safety Month—pages 21–24

Become a Member of the "Fortunate 500"

Boost your purple portfolio with this stunning 500-carat genuine amethyst necklace for $149!

NEW YORK—Wall Street insiders are buzzing over Stauer's latest IPO (Impressive Purple Offer). The launch of the ***Fortunate 500 Amethyst Necklace*** is a gorgeous game-changer that has Fifth Avenue crying foul because stunning gemstone necklaces of this carat weight usually come with a price tag just as hefty. That's the way high-end jewelers like it. But the company that pioneered "Luxury for Less," thinks differently. Today Stauer shocked the luxury market by offering 500 carats of genuine amethyst for **only $149!**

Massive amethyst acquisition. There's never been a better time to diversify your jewelry box. The impressive ***Fortunate 500 Amethyst Necklace*** makes a fashion statement without ruining your bank statement. You get the same expensive big, bold genuine gemstones that turn heads on the Hollywood red carpets for a fraction of the price. Each necklace showcases a spectacular collection of translucent orchid hued gemstones that dazzle with soft facets and swirls in THE official fashion color of 2014. And for a limited time, when you order the necklace, Stauer will include the magnificent 90 carat amethyst earrings absolutely **FREE!**

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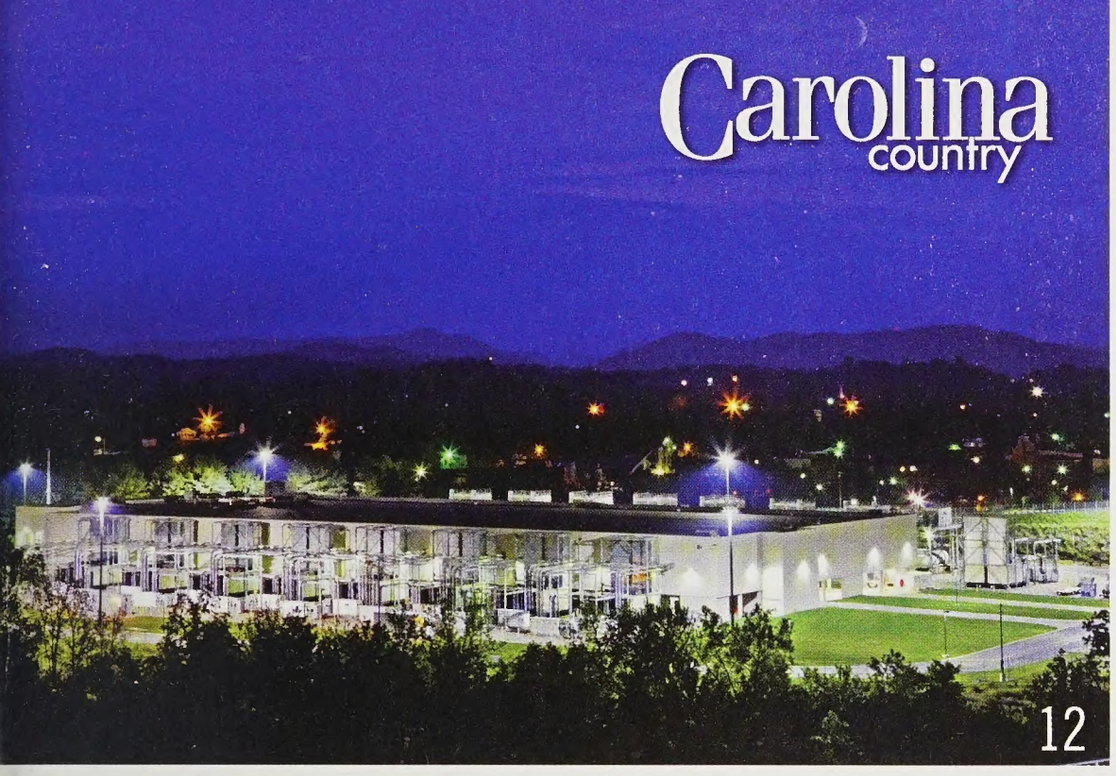

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ON THE COVER
Hawksnest Zip Line, located on Seven Devils off Hwy. 105 between Boone and Banner Elk, is one of the most celebrated in the East. For more adventures in that part of the state, see page 39. (Hawksnest Zip Line photo)

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Your cooperative sends you Carolina Country as a convenient, economical way to share with its members information about services, director elections, meetings and management decisions. The magazine also carries legal notices that otherwise would be published in other media at greater cost.

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A culture of safety

By Philip D. Irwin

For 55 years, the Federated Rural Electric Insurance Exchange has had the privilege of insuring the nation's electric cooperatives. Federated was formed in 1959 when 16 Wisconsin co-ops formed their own insurance cooperative, because they wanted better service, more emphasis on safety, and stable premiums if they could get them. Since that time, we have shown that cooperatives are very good at not only providing a safe environment for their employees and their members, but also at controlling their insurance costs.

Federated operates as a cooperative solely for the benefit of its member cooperatives. We do not focus on share price or earnings. We focus on helping cooperatives deliver safe, affordable power to their members. We don't work through agents or brokers, but instead handle all underwriting and claims in-house, which helps us control costs and the quality of services. Every dollar a co-op pays in premiums goes to run Federated (15 percent) and pay for losses (85 percent), no more and no less.

In recent years, we have seen that our emphasis on loss prevention and our business model have worked well for our members, their employees and the communities they serve. Consider these numbers.

In 1999, co-ops filed 10,020 claims with Federated. In 2013, we had 9,837 claims. The number of claims has not been that low since the mid-1980s. Claims peaked in 2005 at 13,659 when Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf coast and have been dropping steadily since then. Why is that?

Maybe we serve fewer cooperatives. No. In 1999, we served 572 cooperatives, and now we serve 763. That's a 33 percent increase in accounts, while our claim counts are back at the 1999 level.

And today, we insure more than we ever have. In 1999, we were insuring 2.7 million exposure units, and today it's 4.9 million exposure units, an 81 percent increase. Yet our claims are at that 1999 level.

So what's the reason? Maybe we're lucky. But a steady drop in claims during a time when we're insuring more says something else: There has been a change in our loss patterns. Cooperatives are experiencing fewer losses. The "culture of safety" we have worked so hard to achieve has become a reality.

This means that co-op employees are working safer, and co-op members have a safer environment to live and work in. It also means we can reduce insurance costs for your cooperative, which directly affects your electric rates. If we don't have to pay for losses, the margins come back to the co-op — that's how cooperatives operate.

As of February 2014, our board allocated 100 percent of our 2013 margins back to our member cooperatives — $31.4 million. We also returned $8.4 million of the prior year's margin allocations. North Carolina cooperatives this spring received $1,407,717 in returned margins, and the statewide association received $229,540 in support of its safety programs.

Since 1999, we have returned $168 million in margins back to members. Federated's premiums for any given year are not even $168 million, but closer to $160 million. So in effect, our member cooperatives have had a year's worth of insurance at no cost. This is money we keep in the family. It keeps the cooperatives' insurance costs low and helps to contain your electric rates.

As an electric cooperative member, you can take pride in your co-op's safety record and in the comprehensive, statewide job training and safety program that ensures our "culture of safety."

Philip D. Irwin is president and CEO of the Federated Rural Electric Insurance Exchange.

All American

This is our grandson Landon celebrating his first birthday. He is an All-American boy born on Flag Day.

Cindy & Bobby Campbell with Paula & Mickey Marlowe, Statesville, EnergyUnited

Pilot Mountain view

I snapped this photo while out showing property to clients. I grew up on a chicken and tobacco farm at the base of Pilot Mountain and love it from any angle.

Ann Matthew Chilton, Pinnacle, Surry-Yadkin EMC

Corrections

Ava Lavinia Gardner was born on Christmas Eve, 1922, in Grabtown, a rural community seven miles east of Smithfield in Johnston County. She was not born in the Bertie County community of Grabtown. ["Memorials to Famous North Carolinians," April 2014]

Derryl Walden pointed out that a March 2014 puzzle in Joyner's Corner called the longleaf pine the official tree of North Carolina, whereas in fact the state legislature in 1963 adopted the pine, including all pines, as the state tree.

If you're trying to make the Fresh Broccoli and Mandarin Salad ["Carolina Kitchen," April 2014], you'll notice that mayonnaise is missing from the ingredients in the dressing. Use a half cup. It's corrected on our website.

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Bird's eye view

I totally agree that there needs to be more public discussion about whether to encourage solar and wind energy ["Lessons From Germany," March 2014 and April 2014]. As a proud owner of a VW Jetta, I experience the excellence of German engineering every day. Yet the German government closed down 17 safe, functioning nuclear power plants? What a truly colossal waste.

Wind farms do look like an attractive source of energy—unless you are a bird. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimates that fewer than 500,000 birds are killed by wind turbines every year. But Jim Wiegand of Save the Eagles International claims that the annual death toll is actually in the millions.

It seems to me we spend a lot of our tax dollars funding the Environmental Protection Agency. Why are they not doing their job?

Marion Sousa, Huntersville, EnergyUnited

Butterflies and gardens

As a mother, grandmother and retired teacher (who received two Bright Ideas grants), I especially enjoyed the article on butterfly gardening ["Bring in the Butterflies," March 2014] as I raised caterpillars in my classroom and on a big scale in my yard. Your mention of systemic pesticides was very much appreciated, and when buying nursery plants, make sure they are free of pesticides.

There are a couple of points I would like to add. The black swallowtail caterpillar will also eat Queen Anne's Lace. I have the best luck with fennel and have several plants because it is not unusual to have 50-plus caterpillars on one plant. Moving caterpillars from one plant to another will not work unless it is the very same plant variety. They will either crawl back to their host plant or starve. For instance, these caterpillars are so picky, they will refuse even a different variety of parsley. It is also wise not to handle the caterpillars because of disease issues. I move them by picking the leaf they are eating.

The Monarch's overwintering numbers in Mexico are down 44 percent this year. One of the biggest problems is the planting of herbicide-tolerant crops which has led to near eradication of native milkweeds, the caterpillar's food source. Clear-cutting ditch banks and field borders has also added to the milkweed decline. Last year was the first year that I didn't see a single Monarch caterpillar in my garden or my daughter's. It may be the initial warning of the disruption of wildlife food chains.

Ann Rogerson Weaver

ADVENTURES OF THE HOMESTEAD REDHEAD

Things as they should be

By Laura May Conner

This year got off to a wonderful start. Although life changes continue to swirl around me, I am perfectly content with where I am. Each day more pieces fall into place, and each day I wake up knowing things are exactly as they should be.

Happenings with the Big Farm are gaining momentum. My family and I have met with the architect multiple times and finalized many details of the property. We have established where all of the houses and the barn will be, and we are all super excited on how well everything is turning out.

On my 10 acres, we have chosen a great spot for where my house will be built. On the day we plotted this out, I stood in the middle of what will one day be my forever home and looked around. I drew in a deep breath of still, clean air and readily took in my surroundings. I noticed the sunshine in my mama's hair a few feet away, the stillness of the big pond behind me, my neighbor's horses grazing contentedly in their pasture, and my daddy's strong frame in the distance.

The barn will be built in the center of the 30 acres in front of my parents' house. We decided on size, design and color and look forward to seeing our brainstorming take shape. My family and I chose to order a kit barn and will have a local builder construct it. The barn has been ordered and should arrive in a few short weeks. Construction is set to begin once the barn arrives.

My parents' house will be the first of the houses built on the Big Farm. The architect has done a wonderful job designing their house, and my parents have had a blast planning their dream farm home. Once the barn is complete, construction on my parents' house will begin.

All of the happenings with the Big Farm have kept us all very busy, but it is such a blessing to see our dream transform into reality.

I recently upgraded to a much nicer house in Mebane, just a few houses down from my sister and her family. Again Oliver, Peanut and I packed our bags and prepared for the move. Unfortunately, our third move of the year occurred at the same time as a devastating ice storm. Most everyone within a 30-mile radius was without power for days. Moving in the midst of hundreds of downed trees and power lines was not fun, but we all survived.

Over the next few months, I am getting to enjoy all kinds of fun, farm-related events. My parents and I are attending the Mother Earth News Fair in Asheville. We are also going on a farm tour that includes over 40 local farms, and I will be attending a day-long milking school in Virginia. I am learning all I can before the Big Farm is in full swing.

I also welcomed a new addition to my little family, a fluff ball of a rabbit named Raffi. He was found abandoned outside a local vet office. Once I heard about him, I knew he was meant to come home with me. He has been such a fun part of my day. Raffi loves to be around people and gets quite a bit of attention for his traditional Angora rabbit hair.

Thank you for visiting my homestead. I hope spring is bringing new beginnings and blessings to each of you. Until next time, Peanut, Oliver, Raffi and I wish you much love and laughter.

Laura Conner and her family are members of Piedmont EMC and live in Orange County. Follow her homesteading adventures at homesteadredhead.com.

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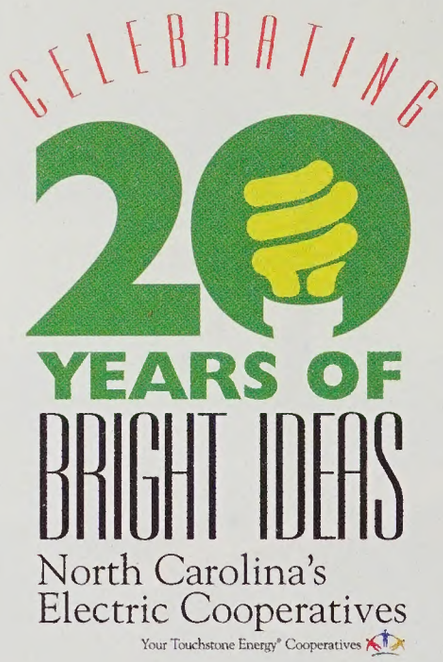
Teachers:

Apply for Bright Ideas education grants

North Carolina's electric cooperatives are kicking off the 20th year of awarding Bright Ideas education grants to North Carolina teachers and are now accepting grant applications. Nearly $600,000 in Bright Ideas grants will be awarded to educators statewide in the 2014–15 school year to fund creative, hands-on classroom projects that fall outside traditional school budgets. Teachers can learn more and apply online at ncbrightideas.com.



"North Carolina's electric cooperatives support the local communities they serve, and Bright Ideas grants are a substantial way for us to help teachers make a differencefor their students," said Lindsey Listrom, Bright Ideas coordinator for North Carolina's electric cooperatives.

Bright Ideas grants are available to K-12 teachers for innovative projects in any subject. Educators can apply individually or as a team by submitting a simple online application. Maximum grant amounts range from $1,000–$3,000, depending on the sponsoring electric cooperative's policy.

Applications are accepted through September, with the final application deadline date varying regionally. Listrom noted it could pay to apply early. Teachers who submit their applications by the early bird deadline of Friday, Aug. 15, will be automatically entered to win one of five $100 Visa gift cards.

To apply, teachers must include a budget, explain the creative elements, implementation, goals and evaluation of the project, and have approval from the school principal. Applications will be judged in a competitive evaluation process, and judges will be on the lookout for projects that feature innovation and creativity. The application, grant-writing tips and examples of past winning proposals can be found at ncbrightideas.com.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Bright Ideas educations grant program. Since 1994, North Carolina's electric cooperatives have contributed more than $9.1 million to Tar Heel teachers for 8,800 projects benefiting more than 1.6 million students in the state.

How many does it take to change a light bulb?

How many college students does it take to replace an inefficient light bulb with an energy-efficient one?

55. Twenty-five to demand that the bulb be changed out, and another 20 to protest changing it out. Then five to convene a forum to discuss why energy-efficient bulbs are better for the environment, then five graduate students to conduct a student survey to find a majority favoring the change, and then to submit a work order to the university.

New CEO at South River EMC

Chris M. Spears

The board of directors of South River Electric Membership Corp. has selected Chris M. Spears to be the cooperative's next executive vice president and chief executive officer. Spears, 51, will assume his position on May 1. He succeeds South River EMC's retiring executive Buddy G. Creed, who has been with the cooperative since 1969 and has served as executive vice president and CEO since 1996.

Spears has served as an apprentice lineman for Spoon River Electric Cooperative, vice president of office services for Shelby Electric Cooperative and as general manager and executive vice president at Osceola Electric Cooperative and MJM Electric Cooperative, all based in Illinois.

South River EMC provides electric service to 42,000 homes, farms and businesses in parts of Harnett, Cumberland, Sampson, Johnston and Bladen counties.

Audit scam

Some co-op members have reported receiving telephone calls from someone offering a free energy audit. The caller claims to represent an electric cooperative and says the member was selected based on a survey he or she had participated in. No North Carolina electric cooperative makes such an offer. It is a scam.

CO-OPS & COMMUNITY JOBS

Officials from Mebane and Piedmont EMC joined the city's fire department personnel to look over the new fire trucks.

Piedmont EMC funding helps buy new fire trucks for Mebane

Piedmont EMC, based in Hillsborough, is helping the city of Mebane to purchase new fire trucks and other equipment. The trucks will be parked in a new 9,920-square-foot firehouse facility which is under construction.

The electric co-op secured $1.208 million in zero-interest USDA Rural Economic Development loans and grants (REDLG) for the project, plus provided $60,000 in matching funds. The USDA funding and co-op matching portion are part of a combined $2.78 million project for the new station (the city's third), which will provide better service and faster response time to Mebane's growing community. The project will also create 12 new jobs and be an asset to the community when recruiting new businesses to the area.

"We are very dedicated to the communities in which we provide electricity and are working in multiple ways to support job growth and improve the quality of life in these communities," said R. G. Brecheisen, president and CEO of Piedmont Electric. "We are pleased that we were able to provide a funding mechanism to help the City of Mebane's fire department expand and improve these vital services for its residents."

"Equipment, especially the trucks, are at the heart of a fire station," said Mebane fire chief Bob Louis. "The fire trucks that we will be purchasing with this loan will be a very visible part of the community for years to come."

Once the loan is repaid to the co-op, a portion of the funding Piedmont EMC acquired from the USDA will continue to benefit the community. The $300,000 zero-interest grant as well as the $60,000 match will go into a revolving fund for Piedmont EMC to loan back into the community for other projects.

Primary election info

Voters will soon have the chance to weigh in on the candidates who are running to represent each political party in the fall elections.

During the primary elections on Tuesday, May 6, voters will decide which candidates from each political party will appear on the ballot in the fall general election. In North Carolina, unaffiliated voters can select which party's primary they want to vote in.

Early voting takes place April 24–May 3 until 1 p.m.

To find your polling place and view your sample ballot, visit the State Board of Elections website. To go directly to the page, visit https://www.ncsbe.gov/webapps/voter_search/default.aspx

Other key dates:

- **Oct. 10:** Voter registration deadline for the general election.
- **Oct. 23–Nov. 1:** One-stop early voting for the general election.
- **Nov. 4:** General election (6:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.).

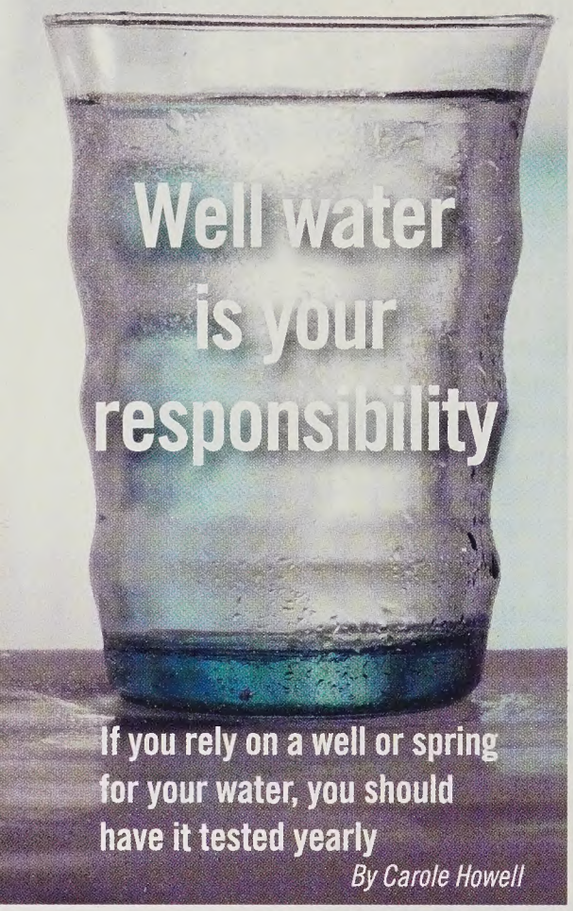
Community radio for Hatteras

Hatteras Island now has its own community-run radio station, thanks to an idea borne by former Cape Hatteras Electric Cooperative (CHEC) general manager Jim Kinghorn. A dream of locals for decades, Kinghorn revived the idea roughly six years ago. Thanks to volunteers, 101.5 WHDZ FM and 99.9 WHDX FM began airing March 14 to Avon, Buxton, Frisco and Hatteras villages with plans for airing soon in Rodanthe, Waves and Salvo.

Hatteras Island experiences storms year-round. Kinghorn envisioned the station as helping the community quickly get emergency information. The idea grew into creating an operation to air news about the island's schools, politics, culture, current events and music programming as well.

CHEC provided tower space for antennas and other assistance for the non-profit station. "Cape Hatteras Electric Cooperative is proud to be a part of this unique local resource and has been happy to help build it," says Laura Heitsenrether, marketing and communications specialist for CHEC.

Radio Hatteras is guided by its own board of directors. Dare County provided initial funding and may be able to contribute in the future, but the station will be supported by memberships, donors, underwriters and volunteers. For more, visit radiohatteras.org and facebook.com/radiohatteras.



Well water is your responsibility

If you rely on a well or spring for your water, you should have it tested yearly

By Carole Howell

"There must be something in the water" is a commonly used phrase, but when you're referring to contaminated well water, it's more than just small talk. Bacterial contaminants and manmade pollutants can cause serious and lasting health problems. Naturally occurring soil compounds such as arsenic and radon can also lurk in well water.

Contaminated well water is particularly dangerous to infants and young children, or adults with weakened immune systems.

Those of us living in rural areas count among the 15 percent of Americans who depend on their own water sources such as wells and springs. We don't have experts regularly checking our water sources to make sure they're safe to drink.

If your water comes from a private well you, as a homeowner, are responsible for your water's safety.

According to Wilson Mize, regional environmental health specialist for the North Carolina Division of Public Health, total coloform bacteria is a battle they fight regularly. Fecal or E.Coli contamination usually occurs in older wells with poor construction that are too close to septic systems or animal feces.

You may suspect your water is contaminated if you are experiencing recurring gastrointestinal illnesses, discolored, cloudy or frothy tap water, or an odd taste or smell. Corroding pipes and rapid wear of water treatment equipment could signal a high pH level.

Get your water tested

Mize recommends testing your well water every year or so to make sure the quality hasn't changed. Water sampling kits and request forms are available through your local public health department for testing at the N.C. State Public Health Laboratory. Contact your local health department for information about water testing services or contact a private water testing lab.

If the lab finds a problem with bacteria, disinfection is a fairly simple process that includes using a chlorination procedure to kill bacteria in the well, pipes and water heater. It's important to remember, however, that the only people allowed to break a well seal are the well owner, licensed plumbers installing or repairing well pumps who have obtained the proper continuing education as required by the Well Contractors Certification Commission, and certified well contractors. Mize recommends always starting with a state-certified well contractor. By N.C. law, all wells must be disinfected upon completion of construction, maintenance, repairs or pump installation and testing.

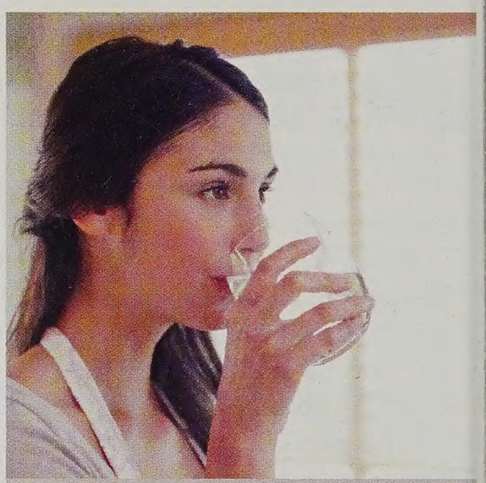
North Carolina legislation enacted in 2006 requires stringent permits, construction guidelines, and inspections for new wells to prevent problems before they happen. The rules include a site visit by a county inspector before construction begins to determine the proper distances from potential sources of contamination such as septic tanks and drainage fields, livestock yards, manure and fertilizer storage, and petroleum tanks.

"New wells rarely come back with bad tests," said Mize.

Some contaminants make water smell, taste or look bad, but they're not harmful to your health. Home water treatment systems and UV light systems can help. A water analysis and a professional water treatment specialist can help you determine what system will fit your needs.

It's easy to forget the value of our water supply until we don't have it, and many homeowners never suspect a problem until it becomes a crisis. A proactive homeowner who maintains a regular testing schedule and attention to possible contaminants can avoid well water problems before they become dangerous and expensive.

Carole Howell is a freelance writer in Lincolnton. For more about Carole, visit her website and blog at walkerbranchwrites.com.



5 Ways to Protect Your Water Quality

- Be careful about use, storage, and disposal of household and lawn care chemicals.
- Minimize the use of fertilizers and pesticides.
- Take steps to reduce erosion and prevent surface water runoff.
- Regularly check storage tanks that hold home heating oil, diesel, or gasoline.
- Make sure your well is at least 50 feet away from pet and livestock waste.
- Test your water every year or so, and more often if you hear that a neighbor's water is contaminated.

To learn more

Find information on private wells and well safety in North Carolina at http://epi.publichealth.nc.gov/oee/programs/wellwater.html.

Rare African Emerald Find Shocks Colombian Cartel

U.S. jeweler seizes more than 10,000 carats and makes history by releasing the One-Carat Pride of Zambia Emerald Ring for UNDER $100!

LUSAKA, ZAMBIA - A recent find of high quality emeralds in this African republic has thrown the luxury gem world into tumult. For hundreds of years, Colombians have controlled the high-end emerald market and sent prices soaring to over $15,000 per carat for top graded stones. But the history-making discovery of Zambian emeralds has revealed a green gemstone with mesmerizing clarity that simply changes everything.

This important find led Stauer, a major gem dealer and importer, to bid on over 10,000 carats. Stauer designed a classic 1-ctw ring for people who love the gem but don't love outrageously priced luxury. Because of their timely buy, Stauer is releasing this exclusive, natural emerald ring—aka ***"The Pride of Zambia"***—to the public for under $100!

Discover a Different Kind of Emerald

"For the price, these natural gemstones were the most magnificent emeralds that I've seen in 30 years," said Michael Bisceglia at Stauer. "The value of Colombian stones can't compare."

Industry experts back him up. Lab tests prove that Zambian emeralds are less porous and brittle than their Colombian brothers. And gem cutters have found Zambians so brilliant that they lend themselves more to high-luster cuts than traditional emerald designs.

Unfortunately, the window on this exciting emerald opportunity is closing fast. Not long after Stauer acquired their cache, a recent auction saw Zambian emerald prices hit a new record high. The time to act on this great gem value is now, before it's too late. Please call our U.S.-based client service team at 1-888-277-8375 or visit us online at www.stauer.com.

Emerald Is THE Gem of 2014

The rise of emeralds is more than just a passing trend. An article in the *Financial Times of London* from June of this year pointed to the reason. In "Emeralds: Shades of Green Start to Outshine Diamonds," the newspaper reported that emerald demand is soaring worldwide even as diamond demand softens. Rarity is key as fine emeralds are much rarer than diamonds.

"With wealthy Russian and Chinese demand for emeralds way up, we expect prices to continue to rise quickly," Bisceglia said. "That's why we're so happy to have found these beautiful stones at this price."

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We all depend on information and communication technology in our daily lives. That's why electric utilities take all measures to ensure a reliable flow of electricity not only for our devices, but also for back-end services provided by such facilities as the Google Data Center in Caldwell County.

What uses 1,500,000,000 kilowatt-hours of electricity per year?

Powering the systems that run our information and communication technology

by Nancy S. Grant

From the minute we wake up and unplug our mobile phones from their chargers, these little gadgets are our constant companions. We use them to talk, text and send e-mails. Snap photos, share them with friends on Facebook, listen to music, check the weather, get driving directions, watch videos, pay the bills—our clever little devices can do everything.

The way the words, pictures, sounds and data come and go seems like magic. They travel invisibly through the air until they reach my phone or when I send something to your phone. But as much as I use it, my new phone doesn't seem to need a lot of electricity.

What we don't see is the vast and unseen hard-wired system supporting my phone, your phone and millions of other devices. It's a system powered by a lot of electricity.

"Cloud computing" is really down-to-earth

It's not just our phones that give and take information—it's music players, tablets and laptops, GPS navigation systems, e-readers for books, and entertainment consoles like Playstation and

Wii. Our lives are filled with electronic gadgets trading bits of data back and forth instantly, all day and all night.

In today's world, most of that information and entertainment comes and goes by way of "the cloud." That makes it sound like using digital technology is something light and airy. But the cloud doesn't really float up in the sky, so where exactly is it? And how does it work?

In the early days of technology, each piece of a computer network (a keyboard, a desktop monitor, a printer, a land-line phone and modem) had to be hard-wired and physically connected to the other pieces in order for them to work together. In today's high-tech world, using the cloud allows any device anywhere to work like it's connected to any other device—with or without wires in the middle.

The cloud is a three-way system. At the front end are our consumer gadgets such as phones, laptops and game consoles. At the back end are giant computers (called "servers") that hold the information and entertainment we want to use. One role for these servers is to act as an enormous storage system, a library of sorts. But instead of shelves of printed books or racks of CDs and DVDs, all the information is in digital format inside the computers.

The middle of this system is what's really different today. The commands traveling between the front and back ends are sent using the Internet. In the case of mobile phones and many other consumer devices, this is done using radio technology—and that's the wireless part of the cloud.

However, the back end of cloud computing is still very much a hard-wired world. In down-to-earth locations like Oregon, Okla., and Caldwell County, N.C., warehouse-size buildings contain masses of gigantic computers that use a lot of energy around the clock.

Moving data uses a lot of electricity

The amount of data shifting back and forth between our consumer devices and those hidden back-end servers has reached such a staggering volume analysts have invented a new number, the "zettabyte." That's 1,000 billion gigabytes—or to put it another way, the number 1 followed by 21 zeros. And each "byte" contains eight individual pieces of data.

It's no wonder that some people now describe this vast and complex digital world as an ecosystem. In the natural world, an ecosystem depends on energy from the sun to keep it going, to grow the plants that feed the animals and so on in a continuous cycle. In the human-made world of the information-communications-technology (ICT) ecosystem, the force that powers all the action is electricity.

A recent study by the Digital Power Group says that the global ICT ecosystem already uses almost 10 percent of the electricity generated worldwide (about 1,500 terrwatt-hours or 1.5 trillion kilowatt-hours). The report also says that while charging up your personal smart phone or a single tablet computer only uses a very tiny amount of electricity at the front end, what you do with your device after that has a profound effect on electricity consumption in the back-end portion of the cloud. The report says that if you watch one hour of video each week, in a year's time the amount of electricity used by the unseen servers will be more than what it takes to run two new refrigerators.

The challenge for electric utilities is to provide blink-free electricity around the clock to run those computer servers, plus the sophisticated HVAC systems that keep the air temperature and humidity exactly right for high-tech electronics.

The challenge for electric utilities is to provide blink-free electricity around the clock to run those computer servers, plus the sophisticated HVAC systems that keep the air temperature and humidity exactly right for high-tech electronics.

But many of the companies that own and operate the computers we access through the cloud want more than just steady power–they want the best combination of reliable and low-cost electricity, and they want it generated in environmentally responsible, money-saving ways. Powering our high-tech world will be increasingly important for the future of electricity.

Energy journalist Nancy S. Grant is a member of the Cooperative Communicators Association and the American Society of Journalists and Authors. This article originally appeared in the February 2014 issue of Kentucky Living magazine, published by the Kentucky Association of Electric Cooperatives.

CAROLINA COUNTRY
scenes
Photo of the month

Varnumtown talk

Varnumtown is a fishing village on the Lockwoods Folly River, Brunswick County. The older fishermen are never out of stories and words of wisdom to pass down to the younger generation. As a child I would listen for hours to the older men talk around the boat docks sharing stories with one another. This photo was captured while a retired captain was talking to his granddaughter and one of her friends. It really brought back memories of growing up around the docks of Varnumtown.

Trevor McDonald, Supply Brunswick EMC

The Photo of the Month comes from those that scored an honorable mention from the judges in our 2014 photo contest ("Carolina Country Scenes," February 2014). See even more at the Photo of the Week on our website carolinacountry.com.

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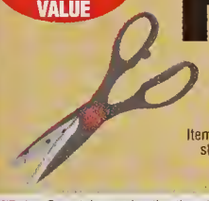

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Multiple entries from the same person will be disqualified.

The winner, chosen at random and announced in our June issue, will receive $25. To see the answer before you get your June magazine, go to "Where Is This?" on our website carolinacountry.com.

April winner

The picture in the April magazine, by Karen Olson House, shows a stone cottage on Andrews Ave. North in Hot Springs, Madison County. The winning entry, chosen at random from all correct submissions, was from Robyn Culpepper of Hertford, a member of Albemarle EMC, whose family is from Hot Springs.

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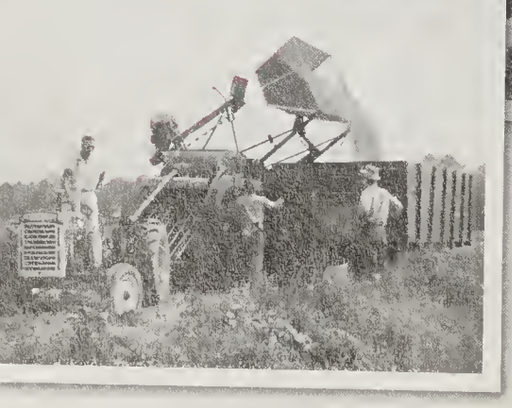
A seed that grew deep roots

North Carolina's Cooperative Extension Service at 100—Part I

North Carolina Cooperative Extension has always helped communities and families meet the challenges of the time.

by Carole Howell



Great things come from small beginnings. North Carolina's Cooperative Extension Service, officially celebrating its 100th anniversary this year, grew from a tiny seed actually planted more than a century ago. That seed—a desire for education and progress—has grown heavy with fruit in ways its planters never dreamed.

Beginnings

As all good gardens, it literally began with the soil. In 1862, the federal Morrill Act provided funds from the sale of federally owned land to establish colleges for teaching agriculture and mechanical arts.

Not long after, a group of young North Carolinians, interested in the economic and social betterment of North Carolina, began meeting in Raleigh. This non-partisan group of professionals called themselves the Watauga Club, and their push was responsible for the creation of the North Carolina College of Agriculture and Mechanical Arts, now North Carolina State University. In states that limited educational access to minorities, the second Morrill Act opened the door for North Carolina A&T State University in 1890.

From the start, college administrators recognized the importance of extending research-based agricultural knowledge to farmers. At a time when the boll weevil threatened North Carolina's cotton industry, lessons learned from research helped contain that threat. In 1907, Iredell County became the first in North Carolina to have a county agent, and the first farm demonstration project applied the latest research to four acres of corn and cotton.

The next year, N.C. state officials and the U.S. Department of Agriculture branched out to the next generation of

Home demonstration agents combated hunger during both World Wars and The Great Depression by teaching home food preservation. Farm wives used what they learned to earn additional farm income by selling their canned products at curb markets created through Cooperative Extension. (N.C. State University)

County agent S. A. Ammons inspecting club member Ruth O'Kelly's poultry, Transylvania County, North Carolina, September 9, 1925.

The federal Smith-Lever Act of 1914 created a partnership with county government for farm demonstration work. By 1936, every North Carolina county had the services of a farm extension agent, who carried the latest research and technology to farmers in the fields. The result was a sharp boost in profitable crops with higher yield on less land. (N.C. State University)

farmers. Farmers' Boys' Clubs, also called Corn Clubs, were followed by Girls' Clubs just three years later.

By 1910, the first African-American county Extension agent, traveling by wagon, was visiting farmers in Guilford, Randolph and Rockingham counties. His demonstrations brought the latest in land-use methods and crop research to isolated pockets of farmers.

The North Carolina Cooperative Agricultural Extension Service officially took root with the federal Smith-Lever Act of 1914, opening up a partnership with county governments to conduct farm demonstration work.

Growth spurt

The U.S. was facing war, and when President Herbert Hoover called for food conservation, North Carolina Cooperative Extension began offering home food preservation classes. During the Great Depression, the Extension altered its focus to promoting family food production and preservation as an anti-poverty solution. Despite a shortage of labor, farmers grew record crops thanks to research and support provided by Cooperative Extension agents. As the war began to wind down, a Spanish flu pandemic struck North Carolina. Home demonstration agents and clubwomen organized to nurse influenza patients.

As the U.S. rallied to fight the war in Europe and the Pacific, citizens went into full production mode. 4-H'ers led scrap metal drives and a "Feed a Fighter" campaign. With Victory Gardens providing an estimated 40 percent of the nation's food supply, Cooperative Extension worked with homemakers to preserve homegrown produce in a time of rationing.

State College, as NCSU was then known, had already grown past its original agricultural and mechanical focus by adding schools of engineering, textiles, education, business and a graduate school. Post-WWII brought the G.I. Bill, and thousands of returning servicemen took advantage of the program. State College expanded once again to include schools of design, forestry, physical science, mathematics, and humanities and social sciences, all to train a budding workforce.

Evolution and expansion

North Carolina Cooperative Extension continued to refine its services for a changing environment. County agents worked with farmers to adopt technologies such as mechanized planters and harvesters, commercial fertilizers and hybrid seeds. The result was less labor and an enormous jump in farm productivity.

Long before today's emphasis on preventing diseases before they start, Extension home demonstration clubs were encouraging women to have annual physicals, tuberculosis and cancer screenings, teaching home nursing courses, and organizing Red Cross blood drives.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 ended racial segregation of Extension programs and brought African-American Extension workers into the organization's mainstream. A new generation of 4-H Club members enthusiastically tackled social, energy and environmental issues.

Cooperative Extension remained in step with a changing environment. In 1969, with the goal of "Better-Fed

Families," a program called the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program taught people how to stretch their food dollars and took nutrition education to families at or near the poverty level. By the 1970s, inflation, oil prices and, later, interest rates threatened to prune back family income. Extension specialists responded by teaching families about budgeting, saving and credit. With the rise in single-parent families and two parents working, 4-H added a school-age care initiative to train after-school care providers.

A techno-savvy generation took advantage of the latest communication technology, the Internet, and Cooperative Extension launched an extensive network of web-based materials dedicated to cutting-edge information and education from agriculture to zoology.

Cooperative Extension has always been there with solutions. When water quality was threatened in the widespread Neuse River Basin, a group of agents and specialists tackled river health, reducing nitrogen levels by 30 percent. After Hurricane Floyd, county agents literally worked around-the-clock with emergency and livestock management, and provided research-based information to help flood victims recover.

And when the U.S. went back to war in 2001, Cooperative Extension and 4-H soon developed a military youth program to support boys and girls age 5-19, especially those whose parents were deployed overseas.

Today, N.C. Cooperative Extension is tackling childhood obesity and a rise in chronic conditions such as diabetes, encouraging entrepreneurs, promoting locally grown produce and training the next generation of farmers. It recognizes that families come in many forms, and works to influence public policy for the wellbeing of all.

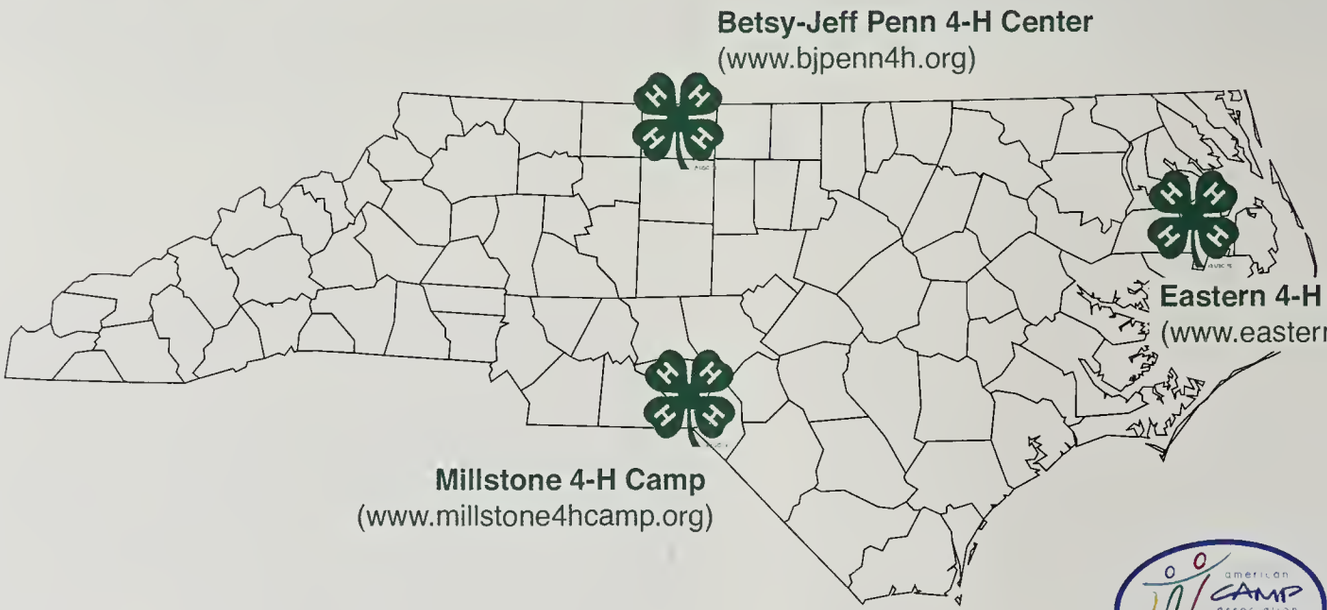
And it's all because of a tiny seed, planted so many years ago by people who would never see it mature, but believed it could do great things. They would be both amazed and proud of how Cooperative Extension has grown to meet every challenge one at a time. Just imagine what the next 100 years will bring.

Carole Howell is a freelance writer farming in Lincoln County. She is a member of Rutherford EMC. She shares her work at walkerbranchwrites.com.

Next month: North Carolina's Cooperative Extension Service puts energy into rural electrification.

See a slide show of historical photos showing Cooperative Extension at work in North Carolina at our website: carolinacountry.com

North Carolina's 4-H Camps and Centers



american CAMP association ACCREDITED

www.nc4h.org/camps-centers

Programs and Centers are open to all youth (boys and girls) ages 6-17. Facilities are available for off-season use.

CONNECTION

PIEDMONT ELECTRIC MEMBERSHIP CORPORATION MEMBER NEWSLETTER MAY 2014

FEATURE ARTICLE

MAY IS ELECTRICAL SAFETY MONTH

WHY ELECTRICAL SAFETY IS IMPORTANT

In honor of National Electrical Safety Month, Piedmont Electric wants to help raise awareness this May about potential home electrical hazards and the importance of electrical safety. This year, cooperatives across the country are focusing on getting "Back to the Basics," encouraging our members to make electrical safety a priority in their homes.

Today more than ever, electricity is an integral part of our lives. According to the Consumer Electronics Association, the average home has a minimum of three televisions, two DVD players, one desktop computer and two cell phones. These modern conveniences, while important, create many different situations for an electrical fire, or for a member of your family to be electrocuted.

Adding to the danger is the fact that many homes (and their electrical systems) were built before modern day electronics were even invented. As technology advances and becomes more ingrained in our home lives, the energy these devices demand can overburden an older home's electrical system, leading to a house fire or other damage.

More than 30,000 non-fatal shock accidents occur each year. The most common products that cause these shocks are small appliances (such as toasters and microwaves), power tools and lighting equipment, according to the Electrical Safety Foundation International.

The good news is, electrical safety measures are easy and inexpensive. In celebration of Electrical Safety Month, Piedmont Electric encourages our members to:

Look at the electrical wires of all the devices in your home and ensure that the insulated wrapping isn't damaged—replace damaged wire or equipment.

Check your entertainment centers and computer desks, make sure that these devices have plenty of space for ventilation.

Check the number of power strips in each room, if you are using more than two it may be an indication that you have too few outlets and you should consider having additional outlets installed by a professional. Also, avoid using extension cords.

MAY 26

Memorial Day Closing

Offices are closed all day for the Memorial Day holiday.

Offices will reopen the next day Tuesday, May 27.

AUG 15

Bright Ideas Grant Early Bird Deadline

Early Bird applications from teachers are due August 15. **ncbrightideas.com**

AFTER THE STORM: ASSESSING DAMAGE AND STAYING SAFE

As May introduces the summer storm season, it is important for our members to understand the risks associated with any power outages that may come from powerful storms across our service area. After the storm, we understand that inspecting your home for damage is your first priority, but these early hours can also be the most dangerous.

Damage from fallen trees is the most common effect of a major storm. Before you begin to inspect your property, look up. Broken tree limbs may be hanging precariously in other tree branches or on power lines. Do not stand directly under loose limbs, as they may fall and cause injury.

SEE STORM PAGE 23

Piedmont EMC funding helps buy new fire trucks for Mebane

See page 9

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Our focus is keeping both our members and employees safe.

R.G. Brecheisen
President & CEO of Piedmont Electric

Thanks to all of the members who attended the Annual Meeting of the Members last month! Because of early printing deadlines for *Carolina Country*, a summary of the meeting will be included in next month's newsletter.

Each May, Piedmont Electric celebrates Electrical Safety Month. This year, our focus is keeping both our members and our employees safe when interacting with electricity. Ensuring that appliances and generators are installed and used properly is not only important for keeping our members safe, but it helps ensure that our line crews are able to work safely as well.

Improper use of personal generators is just one example of how the actions of one member can put others at risk. Plugging a generator directly into a wall socket creates "backfeeding" which puts electricity back onto the grid. This can cause an electrocution risk to utility workers and others served by the same utility line. This can also damage other appliances that are still plugged in.

I encourage all Piedmont Electric members to have generators and major appliances professionally installed, to keep yourself and our line crews safe. If you are concerned about an appliance, or just want more information before purchasing a major appliance, we also offer free in-home energy audits, and HVAC technical advice to identify places where you may be using appliances in an unsafe or inefficient manner.

Remember to always stay away from downed power lines. If you see any downed power lines, call us at **1.800.222.3107.** You can find out more about these programs, and electrical safety, on our website **pemc.coop.**

CO-OP CONNECTIONS® CARD

Piedmont Electric Members have saved a total of

$19,103.10

in Rx purchases since the program launch in October 2012!

Use your card this Summer. Show it and save. It's that easy!

Visit **www.connections.coop/co-ops/piedmont-emc** for discount details.

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Join now and receive a FREE electric water heater wrap kit ($55 retail value).

Join today by including this insert with your next electric bill or by calling 800.222.3107

Name _____

Phone Number _____

Best Time to Call ☐ Morning ☐ Afternoon ☐ Evening

STORM

FROM PAGE 21

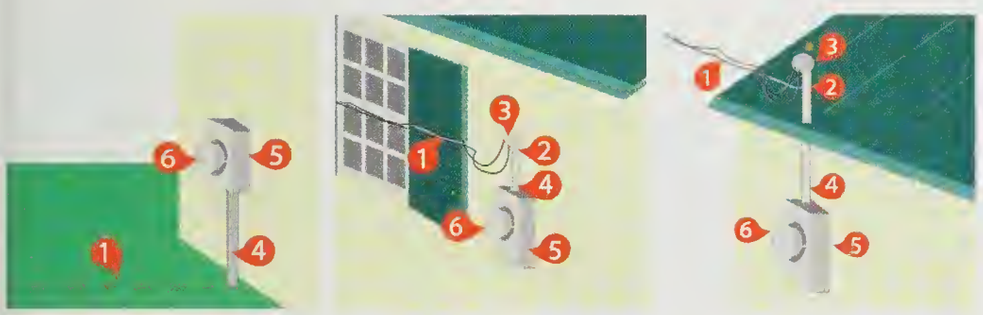
As you begin walking your property, pay special attention to the power lines around your house. Are there any lying on the ground? Be sure to stay at least 10 feet away from any downed lines as you inspect property damage, as lines may still be live. Call us at **1.800.222.3107** to report any downed power lines.

IF THERE IS AN OUTAGE

If your home loses power after a storm be sure to call our automated outage reporting number at 1.800.449.2667. Don't think that just because all of your neighbors are out of power that you shouldn't report your outage. Knowing exactly which of our members are without power is important to the repair effort and can help speed up outage restoration.

WHO'S RESPONSIBLE WHEN THE SERVICE CONNECTION TO YOUR HOUSE IS DAMAGED?

During an outage, Piedmont Electric is responsible for repairing any damage to the (1) service line and (6) electric meter. However, the member is responsible for the installation and maintenance of (2) the attachment hardware, (3) weatherhead, (4) riser or the (5) meter box—the box that sits behind the meter and routes power into your home.



For residential installations, Piedmont Electric installs and maintains the (1) service line and (6) electric meter. If the (2) attachment hardware, (3) weatherhead (4) riser or (5) meter box is damaged during a storm, it is the member's responsibility to get an electrician to repair the damage before Piedmont Electric can restore service. In some instances, an electrical inspection may be required before Piedmont Electric can reconnect your service.

CHARGES ARE SET FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY & ENERGY EFFICIENCY RATES

Changes in the riders are due to general costs for purchases and programs being different than forecasted and requiring a true-up to reflect actual costs.

RENEWABLE ENERGY RIDER

The following Renewable Energy Rider charges are effective May 1, 2014, and will be in effect for 12 months.

	PREVIOUS CHARGES	NEW CHARGES
RESIDENTIAL	$0.36/monthly	$0.35/monthly
COMMERCIAL	$4.45/monthly	$4.35/monthly
INDUSTRIAL	$29.64/monthly	$28.97/monthly

ENERGY EFFICIENCY RIDER

The following Energy Efficiency Rider charges are effective May 1, 2014, and will be in effect for 12 months.

	PREVIOUS CHARGES	NEW CHARGES
RESIDENTIAL	0.0825¢/kWh	0.0798¢/kWh
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL	0.0171¢/kWh	0.0471¢/kWh

SMALL RENEWABLE GENERATION NET METERING RIDER

The following Small Renewable Generation Net Metering Rider excess energy credit is effective May 1, 2014.

PREVIOUS CREDIT	NEW CREDIT
Retail Energy Rate per kWh	0.0556¢/kWh

BY THE NUMBERS

2,320 MEMBERS ↑ 24 MEMBERS
have signed up for the use-monitoring portion of www.MyUsage.com

906 MEMBERS ↑ 8 MEMBERS
are participating in the FlexPay Program

2 MEMBERS ↑ 1 MEMBER
have turned in receipts for 4 LED bulbs, representing a total of 2,344 kWhs saved toward our Senate Bill 3 Mandate

43 MEMBERS
received solar water heater rebates

927 MEMBERS
purchased electric water heater wrap kits

607 RESIDENTIAL MEMBERS
have signed up for Time-of-Day Rates

1,012 VISITS ↑ 2 VISITS
made to TogetherWeSave.com, where you can learn more about the power of your electric cooperative membership.

601 MEMBERS
have signed up to participate in the "Beat the Peak" program

1,388 MEMBERS
are participating in Project Helping Hand

6,063 MEMBERS ↑ 2 MEMBERS
are participating in the A/C Load Control Program

4,617 MEMBERS
are participating in the Electric Water Heater Load Control Program

THIS MONTH'S RIGHT-OF-WAY ACTIVITY

PERSON COUNTY

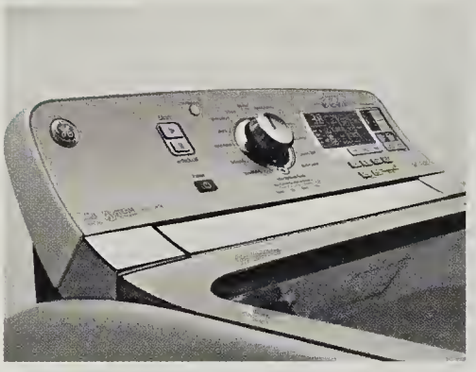
- Antioch Church Road
- Houston Blalock Road
- Lucy Garrett Road
- Kermit Duncan Road
- Dink Ashley Road

(and surrounding areas)

Locations are SUBJECT TO CHANGE due to uncontrollable circumstances.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Spring is winding down and the hot days of summer are quickly approaching, which means it is almost time to begin running your air conditioner and other appliances full blast. Some members may also be thinking of upgrading some of these appliances before the summer months set in.



Remember to look for the EnergyStar logo on appliances. This logo signifies that the appliance is considerably more energy efficient than average comparable models.

If you'd like to save money this summer, without the financial commitment of a brand new appliance, Piedmont Electric recommends a programmable thermostat. These high-tech devices allow you to change the temperature inside your home based on the time of day so that you don't waste money cooling an empty house. For example, you may want to turn the temperature up while you are at work and then back down just before you arrive home.

Choosing which appliance will best suit your family's needs can be daunting, you want to be sure you get the most effective appliance for your money. When choosing any new appliance, be sure to take into consideration how much electricity is needed to run the appliance. Refrigerators, water heaters and air conditioners all require labels detailing their estimated annual energy consumption or energy efficiency rating.

Visit pemc.coop and click on "**Save Energy and Money**" to find helpful calculators to estimate the effect running applionces, or running your air conditioner less can have on your energy bill.

PIEDMONT ELECTRIC CONNECTION

Published monthly for the members of Piedmont Electric Membership Corp.

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*Voice instructions will direct you through the system.

Call 811 BEFORE you dig

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Hot options

When purchasing a water heater, size and energy factor rating matter

By Sheila Yount

Heating water is one of the biggest users of energy in your home, so it is wise to make the right choice when the time comes to replace your old water heater or buy one for a new home.

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, water heating costs make up about 14 percent of a typical single family home's energy bill, compared with 29 percent for heating and 17 percent for cooling. The most common water heaters in the U.S. are fueled either by electricity or natural gas.

When choosing a water heater, the first decision to make is what size to buy. A 50-gallon unit is usually adequate for an average family. Next, look for the bright yellow energy rating tag and check the unit's energy factor (EF) rating.

"Always strive to install an electric unit with the highest EF rating possible, at least a .90 (90 percent efficiency) rating," says Bret Curry, residential energy manager for Arkansas Electric Cooperative Corporation (AECC). Natural gas water heaters are inherently less efficient energy users because a significant amount of energy escapes through the unit's flues, although operating costs may be more or less than electric water heaters, depending on rates and fuel prices, he adds.

For those interested in electric water heaters, consider two of the most efficient ones available today—the Marathon, produced by Rheem, and the General Electric GeoSpring Hybrid.

It's a good idea to call your local electric cooperative to see what water heaters they recommend or, in some cases, are sold by the co-op to its members.

The Marathon water heater comes with a lifetime warranty on the tank, which is made of a tough, lightweight polyethylene outer shell that is guaranteed never to leak or rust. It is insulated with Envirofoam foam insulation and has an energy factor rating of .91 to .95.

An even more efficient unit is the G.E. GeoSpring Hybrid water heater. It is Energy Star-rated with an energy factor of 2.35 or 235 percent efficiency. It uses heat pump technology to heat water. And for those thinking about replacing a heating and cooling unit, note that you can get virtually free hot water as a byproduct of a geothermal heating and cooling system.

The Marathon water heater's tank is made of a tough, lightweight polyethylene outer shell that is guaranteed never to leak or rust.

Further cutting water heating costs

Here are other ways to save on water heating costs:

- Make sure your water heater is set no higher than 120 degrees. This level will provide adequate hot water for most families.
- When possible, place your electric water heater on a two-inch thick rigid insulation board to insulate the tank's bottom.
- Insulate all hot water lines above and beneath your floor. If you're going to have a concrete slab poured, insulate hot water lines that will be located in slab before concrete is poured.
- Locate your water heater in a conditioned area of your house, preferably close to the center of the house.
- If you own an electric water heater with an energy factor of less than .90, consider adding an insulating blanket over the unit to further insulate it. These are available at most home improvement stores.

Sheila Yount is editor of Arkansas Living, the monthly magazine of the Arkansas electric cooperatives.

Energy-saving HVAC systems

Climate, costs, and technology matter in choosing among the options

By Thomas Kirk

Did you know that more than half of what you're spending on energy bills goes to heating and cooling your home? You can turn this necessary expense into savings, however, by selecting the appropriate heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) system for your needs.

Modern systems featuring ductless, air-source, or ground-source technologies are just as effective as more traditional systems, but are much more energy efficient.

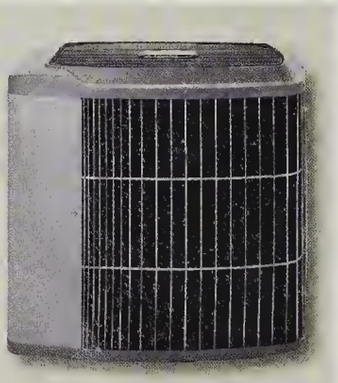
Going ductless

If you are conditioning smaller areas in retrofits, home additions, or in new construction, a ductless heat pump (DHP) may be right for you. The DHP uses an estimated 50 to 60 percent less energy than electric resistance heating systems and may exceed the efficiency of ducted heat pump systems by more than 25 percent. They're composed of an outside compressor, indoor air handling units, refrigerant lines, and a controller (either an in-home display or wireless remote).

A 1¼ ton DHP system—an average size for heating and cooling a single-zone home—could cost about $4,000 to install.

Know before you buy

Before buying a new HVAC system, you can take some easy and inexpensive energy-saving measures in your home. Any of these will maximize efficiency:



- Add caulk and weather stripping around doors and windows.
- Add insulation to attics and exposed walls.
- Move furniture or obstacles away from vents.
- Close blinds or curtains during the day to keep heat out, or open them up to allow more heat in.

This is a two-stage outdoor heat pump unit installed at a home. It has a large condenser coil area for high efficiency.

Pricing varies based on brand and installation needs. But despite the benefits, some consumers may not like having their heating system and equipment visible. When DHPs are installed, units are placed indoors, mounted on a wall or ceiling.

Air Source

Ducted electric air-source heat pumps (ASHPs) provide year-round space-conditioning and can both heat and cool a home. They use a single piece of equipment—allowing for a lower cost in most cases—and provide heat cheaper than electric resistance heating. These systems work by transferring energy between the air outside and either the air or water inside a building. This principle of moving energy, not creating heat, is what allows ASHPs to be more efficient than electric resistance heating.

When choosing an ASHP, consider your local climate and heating needs. Most air source heat pumps are best suited to relatively warm climates, such as the southeastern U.S. When temperatures are low in such regions, a heat pump's efficiency falls dramatically.

Choosing the right-sized system is also important. If a heat pump is too small, it can't provide sufficient cooling, and an oversized one can be costly and require ductwork and other equipment to operate, adding expense. Newer systems are proving effective in northern regions, especially when combined with a backup fuel source such as natural gas.

Modern systems featuring ductless, air-source, or ground-source technologies are just as effective as more traditional systems, but are much more energy efficient.

Ground source

Ground source heat pumps (GSHP), also called geothermal heat pumps or geo-exchange systems, are electrically powered devices that use consistent year-round temperatures found underground to regulate indoor air temperature. GSHP systems are composed of one or more underground loops that act as heat exchangers. They are connected to a heat pump unit that is then connected to a home's heating and air conditioning system. In the summer, the loops transfer heat from the home into the ground, or in some cases, water. In the winter, the process is reversed. In most climates they are much more efficient than air source heat pumps and other standard HVAC equipment.

Savings vary depending on climate. The U.S. Department of Energy estimates that most homeowners will see a return on their investment in a GSHP system in two to 10 years through lower energy bills. A desuperheater or hot water generator can be added, eliminating the need to heat water with gas or more electricity.

Electric co-op and government deals

Think carefully about whether a high-efficiency system will save you money in the long run and if it meets your HVAC needs. Prices vary significantly by manufacturer, region, dealer and time of year. As you comparison shop, be sure to get local or regional price quotes. Some of the best savings and deals can come from your local electric cooperative and from government programs offering rebates, tax incentives, or interest-free loans.

Thomas Kirk is a technical research analyst specializing in energy efficiency and renewable energy for the Cooperative Research Network (CRN), a service of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

This heating system is a ductless heat pump that works on refrigerant lines. They are more expensive but can be 25 percent more efficient than conventional heat pumps that connect with ducts.

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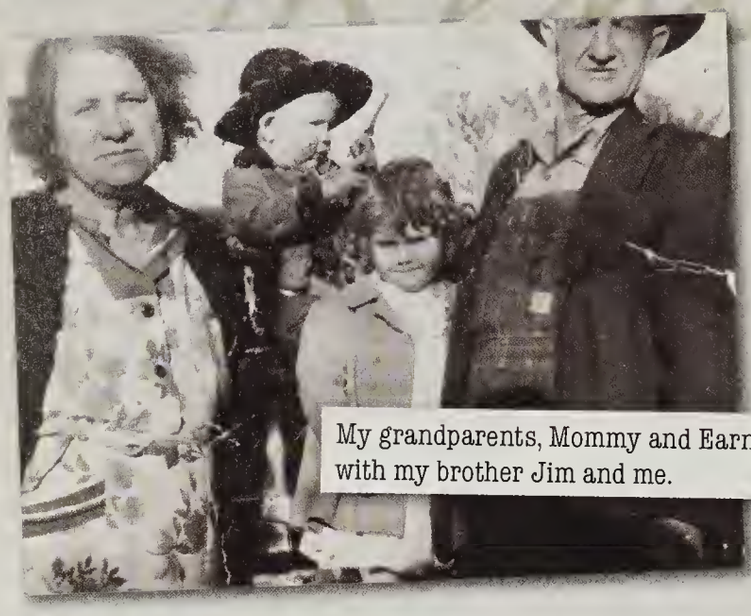

My grandparents, Mommy and Earn, with my brother Jim and me.

Mommy and Earn

My grandparents and dad were from Murphy but moved to Gastonia to work in the cotton mills. My parents lived with them when I was born, and my grandmother babysat while everyone worked.

They had a cow, a garden and hogs, so I was raised understanding farms. After work, my grandfather would hold me on his lap in his old rocking chair beside the pot-bellied coal heater and tell me stories. He put potatoes in the hot coals to bake and put candy bars in the freezer where they stored the vegetables and meat. I thought that he was the most amazing man in the world.

When my grandfather retired, they moved back to Murphy to a small farm. I had two brothers by that time, and we made many trips around the mountain roads to see Mommy and Earn, as we called them. My dad would help plow with a mule and haul wood off the mountain. Mom would help make jelly, kraut, butter and prepare vegetables for canning or freezing. When my grandfather was diagnosed with cancer, they moved back to Gastonia to live with my parents until they died.

Interstate 40 makes the trip much shorter now but not as colorful as the trip through Hickory Nut Gorge, Lake Lure, Cherokee and Chimney Rock. I have cousins who are still there. and a part of me will always remember and love that area.

Ruth Nesbitt, New Bern, Tideland EMC

Before my life began

This picture taken of my two older brothers in the summer of 1949 is one of my all-time favorites. My oldest brother, Wayne, is busy adjusting the straw hat on baby brother, Gene, who seems to be totally unaffected by the attention. Wayne is pictured on that tricycle in several photos taken that same day at my grandparents' house. He has never gotten over his enthusiasm for riding, switching to two wheels, of course. In fact, Wayne is now 67, and for quite a few years now has taken up the habit of riding, on each birthday, the number of miles that matches his age. I greatly admire his tenacity and continued effort, but am quite sure I could not begin to do anything like that.

Looking at this picture, and others taken that day, I realize how far we have come since those days of innocent beginnings. Thanks to pictures, we can remember better and even see things that happened before we were born, as I do when I look at this one taken one year before my life began. We are all grown now and have another brother, Jim, who was born in 1953. My grandparents' house has been torn down, so we can never go back there, but in pictures the memories still shine.

Linda Wilson Rivenbark, Mint Hill, Union Power Cooperative

Wayne and Gene in the summer of 1949.

Selling dog tongue

There was a plant that grew in the woods that looked like a dog tongue, and that was what we called it. My Grandma would get a sack and go in the woods looking for it. It took her a long time to fill the sack. She knew the woods very well and the best places to look for dog tongue.

When she got back home she would clear a spot in the yard and spread it out for the sun to dry it, then she would put it back in the sack. A man came to buy the dried plants. Sometimes she would be paid about $100. My mother told me that they would use the plants in making medicine.

My Grandma is no longer with us. The plants still grow in the woods, but not as much. There is no one I know now who still gathers this plant. It helped her pay the bills. She was a single woman, and she had to do what she could to make it.

Mary J. Corbett, Ivanhoe, Four County EMC

SEND US YOUR *Memories*

We'll pay $50 for those we publish in the magazine. We can put even more on our Internet sites, but can't pay for them. (If you don't want them on the Internet, let us know.)

Guidelines:

1. Approximately 200 words.
2. Digital photos must be at least 600kb or 1200 by 800 pixels.
3. No deadline, but only one entry per household per month.
4. Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you want yours returned.
5. We pay $50 for each one published in the magazine. We retain reprint rights.
6. Include your name, mailing address and the name of your electric cooperative.
7. **E-mail:** iremember@carolinacountry.com **Or by U.S. mail:** I Remember, Carolina Country, 3400 Sumner Blvd., Raleigh, NC 27616

Wholesome Ellen

When I hear or read the adjective "wholesome," it always seems to evoke a particular memory involving my mother. It spans back to my dating days as a 19- or 20-year-old and madras shirts and brown penny loafers. There was a beautiful blonde young lady named Ellen. I had met her at the beach, though I don't remember exactly how. She was working at a hotel for the summer, and one night we were supposed to meet at her hotel and go for a walk. When I arrived, another employee informed me that she had left earlier with someone else.

"You haven't known her long have you?" he asked.

"No, I just met her."

"Good," he said. "Then you can't be too heartbroken by her standing you up."

"Yeah, I guess not."

For a lot of guys that would have been enough, but not for me. I arranged to meet her again and that time she showed. I was staying with my older brother who had been hired as a beach photographer that summer. He met Ellen and was also impressed, at least by her model-like appearance. So my association with Ellen continued beyond that first summer, and eventually my mother met her.

Later, when I asked my mother what she thought of Ellen — or when she decided to tell me, I'm not sure which — she characterized Ellen as "wholesome."

The next time I saw Ellen, I told her my mom thought she was wholesome, thinking that might please her.

"Wholesome!" she cried. "Ugh! You've got to be kidding me! Who wants to be wholesome?"

What were my mom and I thinking to even suggest such a thing? I was being rudely fast-forwarded from the 1930s to the 1960s, and never bothered to tell my mom.

And Ellen and I did, in fact, go on to break each other's hearts.

Terry Barlow, Oak Island, Brunswick EMC

The flags for Memorial Day at our cemetery now number in the 40's, with more added as the years pass.

The sign of summer and privilege

Growing up in the North Fork community of Watauga County, our lives in the mountains revolved around the seasons. A blessing of having four distinct seasons was that each one had its own rite of passage. As for summer, one would think that it would be marked by school coming to an end or the long, summer days. Yet, for over 100 years, our community has had its own sign of summer.

Union Baptist Church has honored the servicemen who have served our country by flying a flag over each man's grave. The cemetery, which sits on the hill above our house, raises the flags on the Friday before Memorial Day. When I see the Stars and Stripes flying, I know that summer has arrived.

Flags fly to honor men who served all the way back to the Civil War. There are friends and neighbors, as well as family members like my uncle, Paul Matheson, who served our country in Korea. This year, like clockwork, the flags will once again fly. Their presence serves not only as a reminder that summer is beginning, but more importantly how privileged we are to live in this great country.

Steven Hagaman, Zionville, Blue Ridge Electric

ald fed it cow's milk.

Donald and the deer

When he was in high school, years ago, our son Donald loved animals. He brought home ducks, geese, pigeons, chickens and white mice. His grandfather gave us a horse.

When a little deer lost its mother, we had one more pet. Donald and his brothers, David and Dwight, made it a bed of soft hay in the barn. Donald fed it with a bottle of cow's milk. When it was older, the deer ran loose and ate grass with the cows all summer. It was free and could leave anytime but never did.

By deer hunting season, it had grown a lot. The boys were afraid someone might kill their pet, so they put it in the barn while they were in school. When they got home, Donald went to check on the deer and let him out. Well, some unknown person shot and killed the deer and took it away. It took a long time to accept what had happened.

Grady & Hazel Money, Thurmond, Surry Yadkin EMC

Decoration Day at Garden Creek Cemetery

By Ellen Brooks

Today I said good-bye to a cemetery. I may return to Garden Creek Cemetery with my children and grandchildren as a social outing, but today I said good-bye.

As I drove down Oklahoma Road here in Alleghany County, I thought that since I was a child, there have been as many changes on the way to Garden Creek as there have been in me. The road from our house to Garden Creek was a one-lane dirt road that is now a paved, two-lane highway with yellow lines and all the trimmings. At 76, I may be "older than dirt," but at least I haven't turned into a new, modern version.

Back then, we would drive down the road in a blue pickup. Mama, Daddy and Bobby (the youngest child) rode in the small cab. The other children rode in the truck bed. At one time there were 10 children. Six of us are still living.

Few visitors to Stone Mountain State Park these days know that a little cemetery lies up the hill from the wooden Garden Creek Baptist Church. They walk up to the church and read the sign: "Built in 1897." Some attend Sunday services still held there in summer. My father, Frank Brooks, helped to build this church when he was only 15. My Aunt Maggie wrote its history that hangs inside.

One of the greatest days of my childhood was the yearly Decoration Day in May at Garden Creek. There was a service in the cemetery followed by one in the church. Mama and Daddy didn't make us go to the church service, so we played in the creek, careful of the slick rocks. Mama would bring extra clothing because we didn't fail to fall in—at least I didn't.

After the services, men carried benches outside, lined them face to face to make tables, and we had Dinner on the Grounds. The people in charge kept long boards up there just for the Decoration service. They had cut trees to make convenient stumps where they placed the boards to make seats for older men and women and nursing mothers.

At one service, people were all lustily singing an old hymn. Suddenly, one of these boards tilted, sending the people flying backwards into the edge of the woods, including my very dignified Aunt Maggie. We young people were consumed with giggles. Only when I caught Daddy's glare did I contain myself. Someone had to retrieve Aunt Maggie's straw hat from the edge of the woods. (They never found the hatpin.) But the ground was soft, people were tough, and I do not recall any injuries. They replaced the boards, braced them better, and the service continued.

Grandpa and Grandma are the last of my family to be laid to rest in the old cemetery. Grandpa died fairly young in comparison to the others. He was only 69. Grandma lived to be 82. Some of the graves are marked by a large old rock. Some have fairly recent stones. A member of the Brown family had been laid to rest there in 2011. Apparently some descendents of an original family are still using the cemetery. A man named J. M. Brown was the church's first clerk. A John Brown Sr. was born in 1791, fought in the War of 1812, and died in 1879. There are graves are of infants and young children who didn't make it to age 5. One grave holds twin daughters who were born in 1933 and died in 1933.

As I stood there by myself, I did not feel alone. The child I had been, Grandma and Grandpa Brooks, Mama and Daddy, Aunt Maggie in her straw hat and many others were there with me.

A member of Blue Ridge Electric, Ellen Brooks will send you a map to the cemetery if you send her a self-addressed, stamped envelope to 3060 Mountain View Road, Glade Valley, NC 28627.

Few visitors to Stone Mountain State Park these days know that a little cemetery lies up the hill from the wooden Garden Creek Baptist Church.

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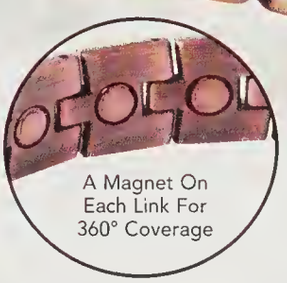

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This slaw-salsa hybrid condiment goes on hot dogs, brats, burgers, pulled pork, fish, within recipes or as a dip for tortilla chips. As owner Julie Busha of Cramerton puts it, this "slawesome" product is versatile, flavorful and healthful. All four kinds (original, spicy, garlic and spicy garlic) are all-natural, fat free, cholesterol free, gluten free, low in sodium and kosher. The gourmet toppings are not gourmet priced ($3.59 at Kroger). Slawsa is in 6,000 retail stores in the U.S. and Canada. In North Carolina, find it at Ingles, Lowes Foods, Food Lion, Kroger, Piggly Wiggly, IGA and (and soon-to-be, if not already) Bi-Lo. Or you can order packs of six, 12 and 24 jars on the following website.

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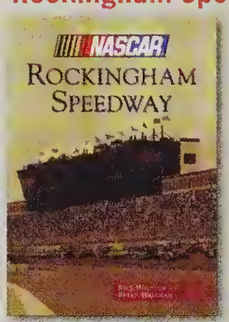
on the bookshelf

Britt's Donuts – Forever Sweet

Not many businesses can claim the popularity and longevity of Britt's Donuts. This Carolina Beach institution began 75 years ago, and folks there still make their donuts in nearly the same way they were made when first pulled out of a hot cooker. This new book traces the eatery's humble origins and growth of this family business in a whimsical and informative way. Authors Daniel Ray Norris and Halyn Prusa sweetly and whimsically sprinkle interviews with past and present employees and behind-the-scenes donut secrets with colorful glazed donot images and vintage photographs of the beach's boardwalk, bathing beauties and other fun scenes. Chapter titles in "Britt's Donuts—Forever Sweet" include "Bobby and Maxine" (the owners), "The humble torus," "It starts with flour," "In the beginning," and "Donuts are like people." Published by SlapDash Publishing in Carolina Beach, hardcover, 136 pages, $19.95.

brittsdonutsfanclub.com

Rockingham Speedway



Located in the Sandhills region of North Carolina, Rockingham Speedway opened in 1965. The legendary Curtis Turner made his return to NASCAR with a victory in the track's inaugural event, while local favorite Benny Parsons clinched the 1973 championship here. A 1994 victory at Rockingham clinched that year's NASCAR championship for Dale Earnhardt. It was his seventh title, tying Earnhardt with Richard Petty for most of the sport's history. Topics include "The Great Eighties" and "Transition." The facility formerly known as North Carolina Motor Speedway and nicknamed "The Rock" experienced a rebirth under the direction of new owner Andy Hillenburg that co-authors Rick Houston and Bryan Hallman cover as well. Photographs in the book come mostly from the archives of author-photographer Hallman, along with a number from private collections. Softcover, 128 pages, $21.99.

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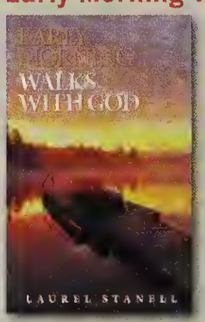
Early Morning Walks With God



Each day, Laurel Stanell takes a walk on a curvy, somewhat hilly road that stretches around the lake by her North Carolina home. It is here that she talks to God and gains strength for the day ahead. "Early Morning Walks with God" is a compilation of personal insights from Stanell collected over her walks. Written in easy-to-read prose, the short entries include Stanell's observations on nature's beauty, the ever-changing weather, and encounters with her neighbors, helping to provide inspiration for those who seek a new way to look at the world. Softcover, 102 pages, $8.99; e-book is $3.99.

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You can reach Charles Joyner by e-mail: joyner@carolinacountry.com

Oh, Henry!

"Mirror Mirror on the wall, who's the fairest of them all?" And the mirror answered back, "I'm not the only one that's cracked."

–cgj

LIGHT VERSE

A pastor whose sermons are lengthy
was urged to condense them succinctly.
Long before he was ready to stop,
his listeners were ready to d
r
o
p. –cgj

UNSCRAMBL'T

"The most dangerous type of inflation is A _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _."

s i t l e e l o v l s o

-Percy P. Cassidy

Use the capital letters in the code key below to fill in the blanks above.

A D E H L S W means
s o l v e i t

MATCHBOXES

This Outer Banks village is near Kitty Hawk.

6	0	0
S	L	L

x 3 / D

8	1	2	0
I	K	E	L

x 4 / V

3	9	0	0	3
D	U	L	L	D

x 2 / E

H				

Each digit in the multiplication problems above stands for the letter below it. Solve the problems and write your answers in the box tops, one digit to each box. Then match boxes to spell out the name of the village.

Phone*etics

The punster says an advertisement is an antonym for an

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

2 3 6 6 6 4 8 4 6 6

If you were to punch in the number above you would spell out the missing word.

For answers, please see page 41

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chimneyrockpark.com

Tourism Day
May 9, Mars Hill
(828) 689-4257

Whole Bloomin' Thing
Festival, artisans, growers, kids activities
May 10, Waynesville
(828) 452-1329
visitncsmokies.com

Naturalist Niche Series
May 10 & 24, Chimney Rock
(828) 625-9611
chimneyrockpark.com

Naturalist Weekend
May 16–18, Linville
(800) 468-7325
grandfather.com

Art In The Park
May 17, Blowing Rock
(828) 295-7851
blowingrock.com

Spring Girl Scout Day/Overnight
May 17–18, Chimney Rock Park
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chimneyrockpark.com

Golf Classic
May 21, Cherokee
(828) 837-2242

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chimneyrockpark.com

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Thursdays, Marion
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hickoryridgemuseum.com

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triadhighlandgames.org

Bass Mountain Boogie Festival
May 2–4, Snow Camp
(336) 376-8324
bassmountainboogie.com

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For August: June 25

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Creating art through fire
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(910) 428-9001
starworksnc.org

Spring Folly
May 2–4, Kernersville
(336) 993-4521
kernersvillespringfolly.com

Oldies, Rock & Blues Music
May 2 & 16, Hope Mills
(910) 426-4109

Spring Folly Craft Show
May 3, Kernersville
(336) 587-6837
thekacg.com

Springfest 5K Run/3K Walk
May 3, Mount Holly
(704) 951-0159
mountthollyfoundation.org

Town 125th Birthday Celebration
May 3, Walnut Cove
(336) 416-0671

Write Now! Writers Conference
May 3, Raleigh
(919) 873-9833
triangleareafreelancers.org

Spring Daze Festival
May 3, Thomasville
(336) 886-5189
www.thomasville-nc.gov

Cumberland Oratorio Singers
May 3, Fayetteville
(910) 630-7153
singwithcos.org

Heritage Day
Food, exhibits, parade
May 3, Eastover
(910) 483-6087
eastovercivicclub.com

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lexingtonchoralsociety.org

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fortbraggmwr.com

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(910) 433-1457
fcpr.us/transportation_museum.aspx

Brass Spectacular
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(910) 433-4690
fayettevillesymphony.org

Author Walter Hilderman
Presentation on Civil War general
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(910) 486-1330
nccultureevents.com

Bluegrass Music Festival
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(336) 859-2755
farmpark.com

LaurelFest Community Festival
May 9–10, Laurel Hill
(910) 462-2424

Mayfest
May 9–11, Pilot Mountain
(336) 429-0121
townofpilotmountain.com

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May 10, Wake Forest
(919) 961-7778
wfgardenclub.org

Bazaar
Crafts, antiques, art, food
May 10 & 24, Wake Forest
(919) 570-0087
thecottoncompany.net

Buggy Festival Benefit
Car and truck show
May 10, Carthage
(910) 295-3559
sandhillsclassicstreetrods.com

Mayberry FarmFest
May 16, Mount Airy
(336) 786-4511
mountairydowntown.org

Yadkin Valley Wine Festival
May 17, Elkin
(336) 526-1111
yvwf.com

GaribaldiFest
Children's games, food, crafts
May 17, Belmont
(704) 825-8191
cityofbelmont.org

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May 17, Lexington
(336) 357-7126
ach-nc.org

Festival Of Beers
May 17, Southern Pines
(910) 692-2936
moorecountychamber.com

Interfaith Youth Tour
May 18, Winston-Salem
(336) 722-9112
eventbrite.com

Lil John's Mountain Music Festival
May 22–24, Snow Camp
(336) 376-8324
littlejohnsmountainmusic.com

Mid-Atlantic Classic Horseshoe Tournament
May 23–24, Gastonia
(704) 922-2164

Family Fun Weekend
Food, petting zoo, singing
May 23–26, Snow Camp
(336) 376-8200
siloamhomes.org

The Color Run
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May 24, Fayetteville
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(336) 786-7998
www.visitmayberry.com

Fourth Friday
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(910) 483-5311
www.theartscouncil.org

Fort Bragg Fair
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(910) 396-9126
fortbraggmwr.com/fair

John & Vivian Hewitt Collection
African-American Art
Through May 17, Fayetteville
(910) 323-1776
theartscouncil.com

Dwell Art Show
Through May 25, Hillsborough
(919) 732-5001
hillsboroughgallery.com

Sports In The Sandhills
May 7–Aug. 31, Fayetteville
(910) 486-1330
museumofthecapefear.ncdcr.gov

Street Video Installation
Artist documents one week in NYC
Through Sept. 7, Raleigh
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ncartmuseum.org

Thunder Road Cruise-In
First Sundays through Oct. 25,
Mount Airy
(336) 401-3900

Bluegrass Pickin' Shed
Thursday nights through Nov. 15,
Laurel Hill
(910) 462-3636

Music Barn
Saturday evenings
May 3–Dec. 31, Mt. Gilead
(910) 220-6426
mgmusicbarn.com

Military Day Wednesdays
May 7–28, Fayetteville
(910) 486-9638
theclimbingplace.com

Antique Gun & Military Antiques Show
May 31–June 1, Raleigh
(704) 282-1339
thecarolinatrader.com

Coast

Kids Night In, Parent's Night Out
May 2, Swansboro
(910) 326-2600
swansboro.recdesk.com

Homes Tour & Art Show
May 3, Emerald Isle
(252) 354-3611
libraryhomestour.com

Derby Dash Bash
May 3, Greenville
(252) 756-9574
rhrnc.com

Fiesta Mexicana
May 3, Shallotte
(910) 200-9209

Strawberry & Wine Fest
Dancing, crafts, tours
May 3, Ocean Isle Beach
(910) 287-2800
oldbridgepreservationsociety.org

Paddle For The Border
May 3, South Mills
(252) 771-8333
dismalswampwelcomecenter.com

Golf Classic
May 3, Oak Island
(910) 457-6964
southport-oakisland.com

Down East Hamfest
Amateur radio operators
May 3, Kinston
(252) 393-4544

Kernersville's largest music festival, the Spring Folly runs Friday through Sunday, May 2–4. Bands include On the Border (Eagles tribute band) and The Legacy (soul). The festival also features a clown show, petting zoo, car show, water zone, arts and crafts and more. (336) 993-4521 or kernersvillespringfolly.com to learn more.

Candle Making Workshop
Moores Creek National Battlefield
May 3, Currie
(910) 283-5591
nps.gov/moc

Nature Trek
May 6, Swansboro
(910) 326-2600
swansboro.recdesk.com

NASA Technology Applications
Learn how they have impacted daily lives
May 9, Sunset Beach
(910) 579-1016
museumplanetarium.org

Carolina Strawberry Festival
May 9–10, Wallace
(910) 285-4136
carolinastrawberryfestival.com

Mother & Daughter Pamper Party
May 9 & 23, Swansboro
(910) 326-2600
swansboro.recdesk.com

Ellis Paul Concert
May 10, Holden Beach
(910) 754-2098
listenupbrunswickcounty.com

Fishing Creek Paddle
5½ mile paddle
May 10, Enfield
(252) 445-2234
enfieldnc.org

Senior Resource Expo
May 15, Greenville
(252) 714-4409
pittagingcoalition.org

Deidre McCalla Concert
May 16, New Bern
(252) 646-4657
downeastfolkarts.org

Hunger Games, Catching Fire
Movie Mania series
May 16, Swansboro
(910) 326-2600
swansboro.recdesk.com

Laser Music Show
With Led Zeppelin, Laseropolis songs
May 16, Sunset Beach
(910) 579-1016
museumplanetarium.org

Potato Festival
May 16–18, Elizabeth City
(252) 338-4104
ncpotatofestival.com

Air Show
May 16–18, Cherry Point
(252) 466-5895
cherrypointairshow.com

Deidre McCalla Concert
May 17, Beaufort
(252) 646-4657
downeastfolkarts.org

Laser Music Show
Pink Floyd & U2 songs
May 17, Sunset Beach
(910) 579-1016
museumplanetarium.org

Horse Show
May 17, Elizabeth City
(252) 771-5771
discoverelizabethcity.com

Party On The Perquimans
May 17, Hertford
(252) 426-7567

Country Roads Bike Tour
May 17, Scotland Neck
(252) 826-3152
townofscotlandneck.com

BathFest
Heritage events, kids games, demos
May 17, Bath
(252) 923-3971
bathfest.com

ARTrageous Art Show
May 17–18, Morehead City
(252) 726-9156
artscouncilcarteret.org

Coastal Gardening Festival
Baum Center
May 18, Kill Devil Hills
(252) 473-4290
facebook.com/DareCountyMasterGardeners

The Entertainers Concert
May 23, Ocean Isle Beach
(910) 579-1016
museumplanetarium.org

Memorial Day Observance
May 26, Elizabeth City
(252) 771-5771
harborofhospitality.blogspot.com

Continental Divide Concert
May 30, Ocean Isle Beach
(910) 579-1016
museumplanetarium.org

Our Amazing Race
Benefit to fight domestic violence
May 31, Washington
(252) 945-8135
ruths-house.org

ONGOING

Art Walk
First Friday, Elizabeth City
(252) 335-5330
http://ecncart.com

Art Walk
First Friday, Greenville
(252) 561-8400
www.uptowngreenville.com

Historic District Guided Tours
Second Saturdays Tours
Through October
Murfreesboro
(252) 398-5922

Beginner Painting Class
May 1–29, Swansboro
(910) 326-2600
swansboro.recdesk.com

Pound
New fitness class
May 5–July 7, Swansboro
(910) 326-2600
swansboro.recdesk.com

Intermediate Ballroom Dancing
May 7–28, Swansboro
(910) 326-2600
swansboro.recdesk.com

Quilting: Beach Blanket
May 10, 17 & 31, Swansboro
(910) 326-2600
swansboro.recdesk.com

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CAROLINA COUNTRY adventures

No snow? No problem in Boone, a year-round destination for adventure

Ziplining at Hawksnest

Grandfather Mountain

Tweetsie Railroad

As spring brings warmer temperatures to the North Carolina mountains and the snow melts into the creeks and streams, the Boone area shakes off the boots and jackets in exchange for sandals and shorts, turning winter wonderland activities involving skis and skates into hiking, ziplining and water adventures.

Outdoors

- ZIPLINES: The area boasts three zipline outfits: Hawksnest Zip Line (hawksnestzipline.com), Screaming Ziplines (screamingziplines.com) and Sky Valley Zip Tours (skyvalleyziptours.com). All feature tree canopy tours that run about 2 hours. At year-round Hawksnest, children as young as 8 can zip, and the tour has had a man 86 years young enjoy the ride!
- GRANDFATHER MOUNTAIN, **Linville** (grandfather.com, 828-733-2013): Hiking, an animal preserve that now features a bald eagle habitat, along with bears, deer and other animals, are just a part of the park. The Mile High Swinging Bridge is now wheelchair accessible so all can enjoy the 360-degree panoramic view of the mountain.
- WATER ACTIVITIES: The New River, Watauga River, Wilson's Creek and the Nolichucky River provide tubing, paddling and whitewater rafting opportunities. Local outfitters such as Wahoo's Adventures (wahoosadventures.com, 800-444-RAFT) offer packages for all levels at all four waterways.
- Other sites include the Blue Ridge Parkway, The Blowing Rock, Rocky Knob Mountain Bike Park, Julian Price Park, Elks Knob State Park and a plethora of outdoor activities.

Places of interest

- TWEETSIE RAILROAD, **Blowing Rock** (800-526-5740, tweetsie.com): The state's first family theme park opened in 1955 and still thrills all ages with the Old West robberies, gunfights and riding in a train pulled by a coal-fired Engine No. 12 (built in 1917) and Engine No. 190 (built in 1943). The 200-acre park also features restaurants, shops, carnival rides and musical shows.
- MYSTERY HILL, **Blowing Rock** (828-264-2792, mysteryhill.nc.com): For more than 65 years, visitors have tried to defy gravity in the Mystery House, but feel the gravitational pull, witness balls rolling and water flowing uphill.
- DOC'S GEM MINING, **Blowing Rock, adjacent to Mystery Hill** (828-264-4499, docsrocks.net): Open all year; specializes in North Carolina gemstones. A geologist on staff explains what's in your bucket of rocks and how each became a gem. The site also has a fossil museum.
- MAST GENERAL STORE, **Valle Crucis** (828-963-6511, mastgeneralstore.com): An old-fashioned general store, with barrels of candy—'nuff said.

For more information, visit exploreboonearea.com or call (828) 264-1299.

—Renee Gannon

By L.A. Jackson

Sweet Betsy

The riddle of sweet Betsy

When the small, deep maroon to rust-red flowers of the sweet Betsy bush (Calycanthus floridus) open in the spring, some gardeners swear they have one of the most pleasing garden fragrances on the planet, while other backyard growers swear at their bushes for having absolutely no scent.

What gives?

It seems sweet Betsy can be a fickle lady. Also known as sweet shrub, Carolina allspice, strawberry shrub, spicebush and sweet bubby bush, this native ornamental, which grows 6 to 9 feet high, produces masses of blossoms that, depending on the plant, can range in fragrance from very obvious to none at all.

So, how can you get your hands on a sweet Betsy that is guaranteed to waft wonderful perfume into your garden? Just walk close to one in full bloom and sniff. A scented sweet Betsy is hard to miss.

If the bush you find is in a friend's yard, suckers readily sprout in the soil from the main plant, so, with permission, you can dig up one of the plantlets, which, in time, will produce the same sweet flowers. Although it is better to transplant suckers in the fall or winter, they can be moved in the spring if ground moisture needs are met during their first summer in the garden.

The straight species of sweet Betsy is the main culprit that produces wild swings in fragrance strength, but cultivars have been developed to be more dependable when it comes to sweet aromas. Three such selections are 'Edith Wilder', 'Michael Lindsey' and 'Athens' (which actually has yellowish-green flowers). However, since there is still some variation in scent intensity and particular smell, which can range from strawberries, bananas, pineapples to even bubblegum, visit local nurseries this spring when these bushes are in bloom and let your nose choose the right sweet Betsy for you.

And while its fragrant flowers are what draws most gardeners to sweet Betsy, also keep in mind that, come autumn, this lady exits the growing season in a coat of gorgeous yellow leaves.

Garden To Do's

- If this year's cool spring delayed the start of your warm-season veggie patch, don't worry, May is still a prime time to plant snap beans, tomatoes, squash, cucumbers, watermelons, pumpkins, corn and cantaloupes.
- And if you held off until now planting hot peppers, sweet peppers, eggplant, southern peas, lima beans and okra, you are one smart gardener because these heat-seeking vegetables are especially sensitive to being grown in cool soil.
- Remember where you planted your taros, hostas, hardy begonias, Japanese anemones or butterfly weed? Don't be so quick to write them off as dead and find replacements—these shy beauties usually sprout late in the spring.
- Climbing roses don't live up to their name—they need to be trained and tied onto supports. To prevent damage, tie them loosely.
- If azaleas are looking a little raggedy, wait until after they have finished blooming to trim them into proper shape.
- Tender summer bulbs such as caladiums, dahlias, cannas and gladioli can now be planted.
- Whether for the lawn or the garden, when you water, water deeply. Long, thorough waterings encourage roots to penetrate deep into the soil, making plants less susceptible to suffering during periods of hot, dry weather.
- Have an old mail box in the garage? Give it a fresh, bright coat of paint and nail it to a post in the garden to store string, plant tags, twist-ties, hand tools and other small backyard-growing essentials.
- The water garden is beginning to get into the swing of spring. For the best flower shows from lily and lotus plants, fertilize them about every three weeks. Marginal plants such as rose mallow, cardinal flower, spike rush, dwarf papyrus, colocasia and sweet flag will also benefit from a light addition of nutrients every five to six weeks.

L.A. Jackson is the former editor of Carolina Gardener Magazine. If you would like to ask him a question about your garden, contact L.A. at: lajackson1@gmail.com.

Tip of the Month

In need of long-lasting identification tags for your garden's pretties? Aluminum drink cans can be recycled as plant labels. Using scissors, simply cut strips from the cans into rectangles or whatever creative shapes you would like. Watch out for jagged edges, or, even better, wear light gloves. File down any sharp slivers or corners. Then, lay the tags-to-be flat on a board and use a ball point pen to indent permanent impressions of plant names (and, if you are so artistically inclined, even draw figures) in the soft metal on the unpainted side. If you are going to hang the tags, just use a paper punch to make holes for string.

Business Opportunities

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SAVANNAH, GA., 2/BR PRESIDENTIAL VILLA–May 13-16, $1200. If interested e-mail gagirl128@bellsouth.net. Beach Villa–N. Ocean Blvd., Myrtle Beach, SC, 1/BR-1/BA–June 15–22, $900, or 1/BR-1/BA, June 23–28, $650. If interested e-mail gagirl128@bellsouth.net

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Real Estate

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GOVERNMENT HOMES FOR SALE BY AUCTION: 220 Smallwood Rd., Hubert; 303 Mertz Ct., Hubert; 108 Starkys Creek Ct., Maysville; 406 Kristin St., Elizabeth City; 107 Harney St., Elizabeth City; 1011 Sundown Dr., Elizabeth City; 809 Rock Spring Rd., Fayetteville; 3342 Harbour Pt. Pl., Fayetteville; 1004 Carnegie Dr., Fayetteville; 112 Bonnie Brook Ct., Aberdeen. Homes are move-in ready, excellent condition, well maintained, private parking, restrooms, multiple bedrooms, excellent walkability, near schools. For more information: (415) 522-2842, www.propertydisposal.gsa.gov

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Strawberries and Cream Icebox Cake

- 1½ cups self-rising flour
- ⅔ cup sugar
- ¾ cup butter, melted
- ½ cup whole milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 large eggs
- 1 cup strawberry syrup, such as Smucker's Strawberry Syrup, divided
- 1½ cups heavy whipping cream
- ½ cup confectioners' sugar
- ⅓ cup sour cream
- 1½ cups fresh strawberries, hulled and quartered
- ⅓ cup chopped pecans, toasted

Spray a 9-inch square baking dish with non-stick baking spray with flour. In a large bowl, combine flour and sugar. Add butter, milk, vanilla and eggs. Beat at low speed with an electric mixer just until blended. Pour batter into prepared dish.

Bake at 350 degrees until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean, approximately 23 minutes. Remove from oven. While cake is warm, pierce entire surface with a fork or wooden pick. Pour ¾ cup strawberry syrup over cake. Cover and refrigerate until chilled, approximately 3 hours.

In a medium bowl, combine cream, confectioners' sugar and sour cream. Beat at high speed with an electric mixer until stiff peaks form. Spread over cake; top with strawberries and pecans. Drizzle with remaining ¼ cup strawberry syrup. Serve immediately, or cover and refrigerate for up to 6 hours, adding strawberry syrup just before serving.

From Your Kitchen

Banana Pudding Cookies

- 1 cup butter or margarine, softened
- ¾ cup sugar
- 1 ripe banana
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- ½ cup shortening
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¾ cup crushed vanilla wafers
- 1 cup white chocolate chips

Beat butter and shortening at medium speed until creamy. Gradually add sugar and crushed vanilla wafers, beating well. Add banana and vanilla; mix well with a spoon.

Combine flour, baking soda and salt. Add to previous mixture; mix well. Stir in white chocolate chips.

Drop dough by teaspoonfuls onto ungreased cookie sheets and bake at 350 degrees for 12 minutes or until golden. Cool 1 minute on cookie sheet. Remove to wire racks to cool completely.

This recipe comes from Brandy Fawcett of Monroe.

Send Us Your Recipes

Contributors whose recipes are published will receive $25. We retain reprint rights for all submissions. Recipes submitted are not necessarily entirely original. Include your name, address, phone number (for questions), and the name of your electric cooperative. Mail to: Carolina Country Kitchen, P.O. Box 27306, Raleigh, NC 27611 or E-mail to: Jenny.Lloyd@carolinacountry.com.

Smoked Ham and Rice Salad

- 1 cup white rice
- 1½ cups water
- 1 cup diced smoked ham
- 12 cherry tomatoes, halved or quartered
- ½ cup coarsely chopped fresh parsley
- ½ red onion, diced
- ¼ cup thinly sliced green onion
- 1 jalapeno, stemmed, seeded and minced
- 3 tablespoons red wine vinegar, plus additional to taste
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 tablespoons Creole mustard
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt, plus additional to taste
- ¼ teaspoon ground black pepper, plus additional to taste

In a medium saucepan, bring rice and 1½ cups water to a boil over medium-high heat. Cover, and reduce heat to low. Simmer 18 minutes. Remove from heat, and let stand 10 minutes, covered, to allow rice to finish cooking. Fluff rice with a fork.

In a large bowl, combine rice, ham, tomatoes, parsley, onions, jalapeno, vinegar, olive oil, mustard, salt and pepper. Stir well, breaking up any clumps of rice. Season to taste with additional salt, pepper or vinegar, if desired.

Yield: 6 to 8 servings

Crushed Red Potatoes with Basil

- 1 pound new potatoes
- ½ cup shaved Parmesan cheese
- ½ cup olive oil
- ¼ cup fresh basil leaves
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh chives
- 1 ½ teaspoons sea salt
- ¾ teaspoon ground black pepper
- Garnish: fresh basil

In a large saucepan, place potatoes, and cover with water. Cook over high heat until potatoes are fork tender, 15 to 20 minutes; drain. Add cheese, olive oil, basil, chives, salt and pepper. Using a wooden spoon, crush each potato until it splits. Serve immediately. Garnish with basil, if desired.

Yield: 4 to 6 servings

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Unless otherwise noted, recipes courtesy of Taste of the South magazine, preserving the past and celebrating the future of southern food. tasteofthesouthmagazine.com

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CHANNELS FOR 3 MONTHS - OVER 50 CHANNELS!

HBO. CINEMAX. BLOCKBUSTER @HOME. SHOWTIME. starz.

Offer subject to change based on premium channel availability.

1-800-455-3813
Mon- Fri: 7am - 11pm cst Sat: 8am - 10pm cst Sun: 9am - 8pm cst

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dish AUTHORIZED RETAILER

*Feature must be enabled by customer. Available with qualifying packages. Monthly DVR and receiver fees apply. Live and recorded TV requires a broadband connected, Sling-enabled DVR. FlexTV Offer Important Terms and Conditions: Activation fee: FlexTV plan requires $199 activation fee and receiver purchase. Customers subscribing to DishLATINO or qualifying International programming package receive instant $100 credit on activation fee. Installation/Equipment Requirements: Monthly fees and limits on number and type of receivers will apply. All charges, including monthly programming, pay-per-view and equipment upgrades, must be paid in advance; failure to pay by due date will lead to service disconnection within 24 hours. Other Promotional Offers (not eligible for FlexTV Offer) Important Terms and Conditions: Require activation of new qualifying DISH service. All prices, fees, charges, packages, programming, features, functionality and offers subject to change without notice. After 12-month promotional period, then-current everyday monthly price applies and is subject to change. ETF: If you cancel service during first 24 months, early cancellation fee of $20 for each month remaining applies. Activation fee may apply. Premium Channels: 3-month premium offer value is $165; after promotional period, then-current everyday monthly prices apply and are subject to change. Blockbuster @Home requires Internet to stream content. HD-only channels not available with select packages. Hopper Features: AutoHop feature is only available with playback the next day of select primetime shows on ABC, CBS, FOX and NBC as part of PrimeTime Anytime feature. Both features are subject to availability. Installation/Equipment Requirements: Free Standard Professional Installation only. Certain equipment is leased and must be returned to DISH upon cancellation or unreturned equipment fees apply. Upfront and additional monthly fees may apply. Recording hours vary; 2000 hours based on SD programming. Equipment comparison based on equipment available from major TV providers as of 1/17/14. Watching live and recorded TV anywhere requires an Internet-connected, Sling-enabled DVR and compatible mobile device. Miscellaneous: Offers available for new and qualified former customers, and subject to terms of applicable Promotional and Residential Customer agreements. State reimbursement charges may apply. Additional restrictions and taxes may apply. Offers end 6/12/14. HBO®, Cinemax® and related channels and service marks are the property of Home Box Office, Inc. SHOWTIME is a registered trademark of Showtime Networks Inc., a CBS Company. STARZ and related channels and service marks are property of Starz Entertainment, LLC. Internet Regular monthly rate and Promotional Rates for High Speed Internet Product varies by providers available at each individual address. $19.99 rate is most widely available product. Call for providers available.